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‘Defender of Faith’: is there an Anglican Theology of Religious Pluralism?

The Church of England and Other Faiths, 1966–1996

Theresa H. N. Kuin Lawton
January 2011

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABM	<i>Advisory Board for Ministry of the Church of England</i>
ACC	<i>Anglican Consultative Council</i>
BCC	<i>British Council of Churches (changed name to CCBI in 1990, when the Catholic Church became a partner)</i>
BoE	<i>Board of Education of the Church of England</i>
BoM	<i>Board of Mission of the Church of England (est. 1991)</i>
BMU	<i>Board for Mission and Unity of the Church of England (Dissolved in 1991 to become the BoM)</i>
BSR	<i>Board for Social Responsibility of the Church of England</i>
CBAC	<i>Committee for Black Anglican Concerns (est. 1987)</i>
CBMS	<i>The Conference of British Missionary Societies in Great Britain and Ireland</i>
CCBI	<i>Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland (est.1990, when the Catholic Church became a partner of the British Council of Churches)</i>
CCEE	<i>Council of European Episcopal Conferences</i>
CCIFR	<i>Churches' Commission on Inter Faith Relations</i>
CCRJ	<i>Churches' Commission For Racial Justice</i>
CCU	<i>Council for Christian Unity of the Church of England (est. 1991 after separation of ecumenical matters from the Board of Mission)</i>
CEC	<i>Conference of European Churches</i>
CHP	<i>Church House Publishing (Church of England)</i>
CIPA	<i>Christian Interfaith Practitioners Association (est. 1996)</i>
CIO	<i>Church Information Office</i>
CMEAC	<i>Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (change of name from the CBAC in 1995)</i>
CTBI	<i>Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (name change for the CCBI, in 1999)</i>
CTE	<i>Churches Together in England</i>

CRPOF	<i>Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths, within the BCC (est. 1977)</i>
CRRU	<i>Community and Race Relations Unit (of the BCC est. 1971)</i>
CUP	<i>Cambridge University Press</i>
GS	<i>General Synod of the Church of England (used as a preface to an archive catalogue number)</i>
HCC	<i>Hospital Chaplaincies Council</i>
IFCG	<i>Inter Faith Consultative Group, of the BMU (est. 1980)</i>
MEC	<i>Missionary and Ecumenical Council of the Church of England (changed in 1973 to the Board for Mission and Unity, or BMU)</i>
MTAG	<i>Mission Theological Advisory Group of the Board of Mission of the Church of England</i>
PWM	<i>Partnership for World Mission of the Church of England</i>
RP	<i>Reports of Proceedings of the General Synod of the Church of England</i>

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INTRODUCTION

The object of this introduction is to establish the parameters of study, to propose a thesis and to outline the background to the question raised by the title of this work.

i Context, Background and Central Thesis

This thesis is concerned with the Church of England's response to other religions between the years of 1966 and 1996. Using official Church documents which address questions of Religious Pluralism in England during this time, I will suggest that there is such a thing as a distinctive Anglican Theology, that it is best understood as Practical Theology (which has implications for the historical self-understanding of what has always been understood as the young movement of Practical Theology), and finally that this theology can be understood in the language of the Theology of Religions as 'exclusive-inclusivist'.

The Church of England has been an Established Church since the Act of Supremacy in 1534, which transferred the title 'Supreme Governor of the Church' from the Pope to the English Monarch, Henry VIII. In 1521, Henry had been granted the title 'fidei defensor' (Defender of the Faith) by Pope Leo X. In 1544, despite the English Church's break from Rome, Parliament conferred this title on Henry's son, Edward, and his successors. In the Church of England, now as then, every citizen of England has the right to be baptised, married and buried in their local parish church.¹ England has never been a religiously homogenous country but after the decimation of the male working-class population in the Second World War, the government actively sought immigrants from the countries of the Empire. This gives a date of 1945 as the start of

¹ Of course, even in the Reformation, those citizens who could not agree with the worship proposed by the Book of Common Prayer, effectively became 'other faith communities', as they chose alternative ways to worship, often in the face of extreme persecution.

the visible presence of ‘other religions’ in England.² By 1966, it became clear that a growing number of the Church of England’s ‘parishioners’ were members of other faiths. The first time that this is recorded in Church documents is in the critique of the liturgy for the 1966 Commonwealth Service in Westminster Abbey.

The ‘Theology of Religions’ is a division of Systematic Theology which has been developing since the 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference and the work of Hendrik Kraemer.³ It is concerned, amongst other things, with questions of Christology, the Doctrine of God, Mission and Salvation, and the nature of the Church.

My intention in this study is to use the official documents from the Church of England and to analyse them as case studies, through the lens of the Theology of Religions in order to determine whether it is possible to identify an ‘Anglican Theology of Religious Pluralism’.⁴ The Church of England is an Apostolic Church, has two Archbishops, one legislative and deliberative governing body (the General Synod) and, as Established Church in England, it also has an historical identity. For this reason, I feel that it is legitimate to try and investigate, with scholars of Anglicanism

² Grace Davie suggests this date in her book, Davie, G., *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1994). For her discussion of the ‘Rapidly Changing Context’ see Chapter 1, pp.10–28. In terms of the history of other faith communities in England, the first records of the Jewish community in England are in 1066. See Katz, D. S., *The Jews in the History of England* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1994) p.xvi. Jews were expelled from England in 1290 by Edward I and returned in 1655. Abdal Hakim Murad, a British academic and convert to Islam (see eds. Murad, A. H., Solomon, N., and Harries, R., *Abraham’s Children: Jews, Christians and Muslims in Conversation*. (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2006)), traces Islam in Britain back to the nineteenth century and the Trinitarian Act of 1812 which ‘can be regarded as legalising the practice of monotheistic Islam in the UK as the Blasphemy Act only applied to those educated in or having made profession of the Christian religion.’ See his lecture to the Conference of British Converts, Sept 17th 1997. www.masud.co.uk/shaikabdal-hakimmurad (checked July 2010).

³ Kraemer, H., *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World* (James Clarke, London, 1956, 3rd edn.).

⁴ There is an immediate anomaly between the way in which I use ‘Church of England’ and ‘Anglican’ interchangeably. This is addressed in the section of this Introduction concerned with selection of material and in some detail in Chapter 1, where I investigate the definition of terms.

such as Sykes and Avis,⁵ the question of what makes the Church of England distinctive and, therefore, whether or not there is *an* 'Anglican Theology' of Religious Pluralism.

The current study is original in the field of Theology of Religions, of ecumenical theology, Practical Theology and of Anglican ecclesiology as it is the first full analysis of documents of the Church of England pertaining to Religious Pluralism in the latter part of the twentieth century. In researching this area, I have turned to the Reports which are debated at the General Synod of the Church of England and to the Reports of Proceedings which detail the Debates themselves. As the title of this study suggests, the first premise is that it is possible to uncover an 'Anglican' approach to the Theology of Religions. As the collation and analysis of documents will demonstrate, the Church of England's approach to other religions has often been in response to socio-political issues (Commonwealth Services, redundant church buildings, mixed marriages). However, the fact that most of the Reports which I shall be analysing as case studies in this field come from the Inter Faith Consultative Group⁶ of the Church of England's *Board of Mission*, shows that the missiological context of the Theology of Religions has never been forgotten. Yet no one has yet provided an historical overview of the period in the Church's history when Religious Pluralism first became an issue of national importance, and this is what I hope to do.

The way in which the Reports are used in each local parish, the common practice of the faithful with regard to matters of Religious Pluralism, has a vital role to play in

⁵These two men are widely regarded as the most important contemporary theologians of Anglican ecclesiology. See McGrath, A., *The Renewal of Anglicanism* (SPCK, London, 1993), pp.13–14 and Carr, W., 'Review of The Identity of Anglicanism' in *Theology* (112/869/2009), pp.384–5. For details of recent works by Sykes and Avis, see the bibliography.

⁶ Hereafter, IFCG.

shaping the theology of the Church of England. In this respect, the Church of England's theology is essentially a continuing dialectic between parish and episcopate and the best way to get an immediate overview of this is by looking at the formal ecclesial structures where the Debate takes place – that is, the General Synod of the Church of England. While there is a continuing attempt in the field of the Theology of Religions to centre it within Systematic Theology,⁷ I argue that while the task of analysis must always owe a debt to Systematic Theology, the Anglican model nevertheless suggests that the Theology of Religions is *not* part of traditional Systematic Theology⁸ but may best be understood through the lens of a very particular kind of *Practical Theology*; namely one which includes and builds upon a history of Anglican tradition and ecclesiology. Throughout my analysis of the Reports and Debates which act as the framework for this thesis, I will also be identifying key features of the Church of England's method of 'doing' theology (that is, its methodology) which support this idea. Putting this study within both the sphere of the Theology of Religions and Practical Theology is what will allow me to make sense

⁷ This systematisation of the Theology of Religions has been a defining feature since Alan Race's use of the 'three-fold paradigm' in 1983 (*Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983)). Interestingly, Karl Rahner rejected the idea that he was a systematic theologian since he never developed a system. Most of the theological works he produced were in response to 'pressing ecclesial and social questions of the day.' See 'Introduction' by Marmion and Hines, in (ed.) Marmion, D., and Hines, M., *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Rahner* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005), p.3. I mention Rahner in this context to show that my claim may be true beyond the boundaries of the Anglican Communion, but that in the context of this work, it is not for me to judge.

⁸ I do not wish to suggest that Systematic Theology as a discipline is no longer useful or relevant. Indeed, the use of reason and logic to try and create a coherent and relevant theological system is, I believe, a pressing need of our time. However, as the point about Rahner (above) demonstrates, behind every Systematic Theology there is a practical reason for the theological response; and this is what I am trying to identify. My argument is that the Theology of Religions is not Systematic Theology, it is Practical Theology. However, there is no doubt that it has to be included in any Systematic Theology because of the questions it raises for the Doctrine of Salvation. The issue for the Theology of Religions is how to not only describe and understand the pastoral situation but also how to identify and comment on the theological issues for the systematic theologian. For a similar argument, see Barnes, M., *Theology and the dialogue of religions* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002), Chapter 1, 'Rethinking Theology of Religions', pp.3–28.

not only of the local, contextual nature of Anglican Theology, but also of the multi-disciplinary nature of this study.⁹

Practical Theology was defined by Browning in 1991 as ‘the social and intellectual context in which theology is brought into conversation with the vision implicit in pastoral practice itself and with the normative interpretations of the faith handed down in the tradition of the Church.’¹⁰ Where the Theology of Religions is traditionally concerned with Christology, God, Mission and the Church, Practical Theology requires that these subjects are ‘refracted’ through the prism of a contextual and, I am arguing, ecclesiological hermeneutic.¹¹ By going back to the official Reports and Debates of the Church of England my intention is to show how it is possible to include the ecclesiological perspective in the Anglican contribution to this Debate. However, the ecclesiology of the Church of England is a complex matter. In this work, I suggest that it is found in the history of the Church of England as well as through its official documents and liturgy. As I trace the history of Debates relating to matters of the Theology of Religions, I will also offer an analysis of the various strands of theology present amongst both the Report writers and those who debated the Reports; in some cases these are eminent theologians drawn from the episcopate,

⁹ It is not easy to categorise the focus of this study. Does it fall within the bounds of Systematic Theology, the Theology of Religions or Practical Theology? Is it about ecclesiology or ecumenical theology? With a very particular time frame (1966–1996), is it an historical analysis? If the Church of England is also an Established Church which is always also faced with political and sociological questions, can this be called a socio-political study?

¹⁰ Browning in the *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (ed., Atkinson, D., and Field, D., Inter Varsity Press, Leicester, 1995), p.42.

¹¹ Percy is the first person to suggest the use of ‘refraction’ as a means of analysing Practical Theology’s response to contemporary culture. Percy, M., *Engaging with Contemporary Culture* (Ashgate, Hants, 2005), p.11.

the clergy or the laity, and in some cases the voices of the laity as they reflect the local concerns of their own parish.¹²

My intention is to demonstrate that in the context of English history and society, Anglican Theology has always been Practical Theology. It is therefore this contextual and historical hermeneutic which I offer as the compatible methodological approach to which I referred earlier. As I investigate the work of the IFCG on worship, buildings, marriage, Mission and Dialogue, I will illustrate this ‘ongoing dialectic’ to which I have referred and I will note that the IFCG itself identified it as a methodology of ‘mutual correction’.¹³ The conclusion my work will point towards is that methodology, theology and ecclesiology are all interconnected and the reconciling, dialogical ecclesiology of the Church of England is not about establishing or defending truth, but about living faithfully in accordance with both the Gospel and the traditions of the Church, in the belief that truth is uncovered little by little, on the way.¹⁴

ii **The Anglican Communion and the Church of England**

In the 1992 Church of England Report on *Multi-Faith Worship*, the Chairman of the Board of Mission wrote that ‘the Board wishes to stress that the booklet has been prepared for use in England. It has not been possible to address the very different

¹² Wherever there are speakers in Synod who are well known in the field of academic theology, I will hereafter be including a short biography of them in the footnotes.

¹³ IFCG Report (not published) *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 49, p.13.

¹⁴ Milbank argues that ‘Dialogue’ as a concept is flawed because it is a part of the liberal secular tradition, originating in Greece; this Western construct is then imposed on the Eastern religious dialogue partner. He suggests a framework of ‘mutual suspicion’ in its place. Here, I prefer the language used by Simon Oliver (‘Review of The Identity of Anglicanism’ in *Modern Believing* (50:2/4/2009), pp.68–69) of Anglicanism as ‘a mediating and reconciling denomination’.

situations which obtain in other countries, even though we have some awareness of them.¹⁵

This approach is exactly the one I have taken in the thesis which follows. During the period I cover (1966–1996) there was an explosion of interest and subsequent written material in the field of Religious Pluralism. However, one of the guiding principles of the Church of England, which I hope to demonstrate during the course of this work, is that it is a Church *in this place*, a Church whose approach to a particular question you would expect to vary according to the culture where that question arises. Echoing the Chairman of the Board of Mission in 1992, it is not that members of the Church of England are unaware of issues beyond the Church of England. As this thesis will demonstrate, in the case of Religious Pluralism, those involved in the Debate usually have a large body of experience and scholarship to draw on.¹⁶ Thus, while I have chosen to study only the Debates and Reports of the Church of *England*, it would be impossible for me to consider them in isolation. For this reason, I make frequent reference both to the work of the ecumenical movement in England (the British Council of Churches, later the Council of Churches of Britain and Ireland) and the World Council of Churches, where their work impinges on the Church of England.¹⁷

The question of whether or not to include material from the Lambeth Conference is a more difficult one. This Conference is a gathering of all the Bishops of the Anglican Communion which takes place once a decade. It is held in England, at the seat of the

¹⁵ *Multi-Faith Worship?* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), p.6.

¹⁶ A common connection between all those who are involved in the debate about Religious Pluralism is their lived experience of other world religions. This ranges from extensive experience of living abroad as missionaries (for example, John V. Taylor), to parish experience in large multicultural cities like Leicester (for example, Alan Race).

¹⁷ Hereafter BCC, CCBI and WCC.

Archbishop of Canterbury, who chairs it. The Lambeth Conference (held – during the period covered by this thesis – in 1968, 1978 and 1988) is the place where work done by the Church of England and other Anglican Churches is developed and offered for consideration to the whole Anglican Communion. Certainly, the strength of the work completed within the Church of England relies heavily on the experience of priests in the missionary field within the Anglican Communion.¹⁸ As the Anglican Church is an International Church, it is of course true that a lot of work has been undertaken on interfaith issues in many parts of the world, and where relevant I have referred to these in the main body of the work (so, for example, the Anglican Church in Japan's guidelines for mixed-faith marriages), however, the work of the Lambeth Conference during this time period does not receive consideration as a separate chapter.¹⁹ It is not a decision-making body, nor does it carry any official authority in any of the Provinces it represents.

¹⁸ So, for example, the 1984 IFCG Report *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* was re-published for the 1988 Lambeth Conference with an additional essay by Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali, which drew on his experience and knowledge of multi-faith relations in other parts of the Anglican Communion. See *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter III, para. 26, p.17.

¹⁹ Nor, for this reason has it been possible to engage with the wider debate about Anglicanism, theology, missiology and post-colonial criticism. This intellectual discourse spans the social sciences, literature, politics, theology and philosophy and traces its origins to Edward Said's 1978 work *Orientalism*. Among notable Anglican theologians who have developed this debate is Kwok Pui-Lan, in her 2005 work *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. Consciously echoing the work of Said, she sets out to 'explain how the fields of biblical studies and theology have contributed to the narratives of empire and how the great theologians I have admired were influenced or tainted by the colonialist ethos and mentality.' *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*, Westminster Press, London, 2005) p.4. In 1998 she co-edited with Ian Douglas a book of particular importance to the Anglican debate about 'otherness', *Beyond Colonial Anglicanism* (Church House Publishing, London, 2001). Taking as their starting point the fact that 'the Anglican Communion exists as a result of British Colonial expansion', their intention was to 'examine in depth the philosophical underpinning, cultural hegemony and social and political ramifications of colonialism and its effects of the life of the Church.' Their belief was that 'a careful and sustained critique of colonialism, with the help of critical theories and historical investigations will unravel the uneasy relationship between the Church and State.' *Beyond Colonial Anglicanism* (Church House Publishing, London, 2001) pp. 14, 17.

iii Reports and Debates: selection criteria

In my search for an Anglican Theology of Religious Pluralism, I began by investigating all those occasions when the General Synod of the Church of England debated questions of Religious Pluralism. It became apparent that there were four key themes around which the largest Debates took place: multi-faith worship, redundant church buildings, the Mission and Dialogue Debates and mixed-faith marriages. The relevant Boards for these are the Church Commissioners and the Board of Mission although in all cases the Boards commissioned the IFCG to write Reports for General Synod. A secondary search proved that these were indeed the most significant Debates at General Synod, in terms of frequency of Debates, time taken to debate and number of Reports commissioned and then debated.

As I have already shown with my reference to the ecumenical movement in Britain, in many ways it is a false division to consider the work of the Church of England in isolation at this time. As I hope to demonstrate in the course of this thesis, the Church of England has, since its inception, seen itself as the Church *in* England and, as such, has always been an inherently ecumenical Church and one whose 'Doctrine' is constantly informed by what is going on politically and socially at a national level.²⁰ Thus it is impossible to consider work from the Church of England's IFCG without reminding ourselves of the fact that this group was preceded by the BCC's 'Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths' (est. 1977), and this group, in turn, was preceded by the 'Community and Race Relations Unit' of the BCC (est.

²⁰ So, for example, the 1992 Report of the IFCG on *Multi-Faith Worship* has representatives from no less than six other Church of England Boards: the Board of Education, the Board of Social Responsibility, the Advisory Board for Ministry, the Hospital Chaplaincy Council, the Partnership for World Mission and the Archbishop's Consultants.

1971). Wherever these bodies contributed to the Debate on Religious Pluralism, I have made reference to them.

The historical scope of this thesis became clear once the initial selection of material was established. As has already been mentioned, the first time that the question of Religious Pluralism was raised for debate in the Church of England was after someone described the 1966 Commonwealth Service in Westminster Abbey as ‘multi-faith worship’. I then wanted to follow the Reports and Debates on the four subjects I have identified as separate categories (multi-faith worship, redundant church buildings, the Mission and Dialogue Debates and mixed-faith marriage) to their conclusions. This came in 1996 with the final Report on the question of selling redundant church buildings to other faith communities.

The decision to analyse these Reports and Debates within these four discreet categories allows for detailed *subject* analysis. However, it also means that there is significant variation in the length of the chapters, as all the documents for each category are analysed in a single chapter. In the case of the category of redundant church buildings (Chapter 3), this means investigating three Reports, one set of Guidelines and four Debates of the General Synod. The documents for mixed-faith marriages on the other hand (Chapter 5) are two Occasional Papers, neither of which were ever brought to Debate at General Synod. This accounts for the disparity of chapter length.

Having established the parameters within which this original research fits and considered the basis on which I have selected the material used, it remains for me to explain the format of the work which follows.

To minimise the difficulty of the theological analysis of Reports and Debates which were not intended to be self-consciously ‘theological’, I have decided to maintain the historical and contextual integrity of the documents used. This offers an immediately obvious format for the work – devoting a single chapter to each of the four categories and analysing each subject by studying the speeches of members of Synod and the Reports written by the IFCG. However, before any analysis can take place there needs to be a clarification of terms of four key matters: the use of the word ‘Anglican’, a definition of Practical Theology, the way in which the General Synod works and the theological framework (or paradigm) used to analyse the Reports and Debates. Thus, in the first chapter of this thesis, I will undertake an historical overview of these four areas in order to establish working definitions.

CHAPTER 1

Setting the Parameters

In this opening chapter, I wish to undertake an historical investigation in order to propose working definitions of several terms that will then be used throughout the study and to demonstrate the links between the three main themes of the thesis. By outlining the background to the word 'Anglican', offering a brief introduction to Practical Theology, giving details of the system of the General Synod of the Church of England and finally, providing an overview of Alan Race's three-fold paradigm, I hope to provide a context for the detailed analysis of the Reports and Debates which follow.

1.1 Tools for Analysis

In the introduction, I set out the three main themes of this thesis: first, that there is such a thing as a distinctive 'Anglican' theology and that it is best understood as one of the earliest kinds of Practical Theology. Secondly, I have indicated that the way I will demonstrate this claim is through presentation and analysis of several key Reports and Debates from the Church of England's General Synod as case studies, concerning questions of Religious Pluralism. Thus, thirdly, this analysis is necessarily undertaken in the context of the Theology of Religions and for this purpose I shall be using Alan Race's three-fold paradigm: exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. As I suggested in the introduction, my work encompasses several academic disciplines; however, there are two key Debates with which I must engage. The first, in the field of Anglican ecclesiology, is the Debate of Sykes, Avis and others about whether the

Church of England has any distinctive Doctrines of its own.²¹ The second, in the field of the Theology of Religions, is that of Race, D'Costa and others as I place my own work within the discussion about the classification and direction of the Theology of Religious Pluralism.²² The third Dialogue partner, which acts as a framework for conversation between the previous two, is the field of Practical Theology which, I hope to demonstrate, finds an historical home in the Church of England.

The investigations of this chapter are undertaken in order to offer a development of these themes, which will then provide the 'tools for analysis' of the material which will be considered in the rest of this thesis. My intention is to develop the nature of the theology I am arguing for by looking at the doctrinal kernel of the issue (the distinctive Anglican Theology of Religious Pluralism) and then at the contingent elements (how Anglican methodology relates to Doctrine, or how Anglican Theology actually works in practice). In order to do this I need to look at Alan Race's three-fold typology in some detail so that the theological framework for analysis of the Debates is clearly established. I also need to consider a brief history of Practical Theology in order to begin to trace the relationship between the methodological elements of the Church of England and Anglican Theology. Finally, the decision to use examples from the Reports and Debates of General Synod means that a short section about the history and rubric of this decision-making and legislative body of the Church of

²¹ Sykes, S., and Booty, J., (eds) *The Study of Anglicanism* (SPCK, London, 1988), Sykes, S., *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (Mowbray, Oxford, 1978/1984), Avis, P., *The Identity of Anglicanism* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2007), Avis, P., *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2002).

²² Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), Race, A., and Hedges, P., (eds) *Reader in Christian Theology of Religions* (SCM, London, 2009). D'Costa has written extensively in this area, but his most recent engagement with the debate can be found in D'Costa, G., *Christians and Religious Pluralism: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2009).

England must inevitably be part of the tool kit for analysis of the material which follows.

1.1.1 *Ecclesia Anglicana*: a definition of terms

It is important to look at early etymology in order to illustrate the background to the use of the word 'Anglican' in this thesis.

The word 'Anglican' is found first in the 1215 Magna Carta and later in the 1534 Act of Supremacy as part of the Latin term *Ecclesia Anglicana*, used simply to describe the whole of the Church as it was found in England. Of course, even before the Reformation, there would have been different ways of being a Church, depending on the people who had brought Christianity to that particular part of England. There is the temptation to believe that 'the Church' before the Reformation was in some way monolithic, which of course it was not.²³ So *Ecclesia Anglicana*, as used in 1215, was already describing a broad range of liturgical practices and theological understanding.

'Anglican' appeared as an adjective from 1650,²⁴ although, like the term 'the Church of England' it simply distinguished the English Church and its members from other National Churches and from the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, the Church of England still does not use the term 'Anglican' in any of its formal expressions of identity.²⁵ 'Anglicanism' was first used by J. H. Newman in 1838, as distinct from 'Protestantism'. Later he wrote: 'Anglicanism claimed to hold that the Church of England was nothing else than a continuation in this country of that one Church of

²³ See Duffy, E., *The Stripping of the Altars: traditional religion in England 1400–1580* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992/2005) for a wide-ranging consideration of the variety of religious practices in England before the Reformation. For example, Chapter 5, pp.155–206.

²⁴ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd Edition.

²⁵ *Declaration of Assent and Thirty-Nine Articles*.

which in old times Athanasius and Augustine were members.’²⁶ As I hope to argue in this chapter, one essential aspect of ‘Anglican’ theology and ecclesiology is that it does indeed see itself as standing within a continuity of tradition and not as a separate, confessional Church.

Since the first colonial Churches became independent provinces (for example, the emergence of the American Episcopal Church, with its first Bishop Samuel Seabury, who was consecrated in 1776 by the Scottish Episcopalians), and following the first Lambeth Conference in 1867, it appears from *ad hoc* usage that the term ‘Anglican’ could mean any type of Christianity which owes its origins to the Church of England and is in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury. So, one important aspect of Anglicanism is that it is a synonym for ‘the Church *in this place*.’ In my research for this thesis I have focused almost exclusively on the Church of *England*. Hence, when I use the term ‘Anglican’, it refers only to the Anglican Church *in England*. All the cases considered are raised by local and national issues in England. Documents used are written for the Church of England and its General Synod, except those written for the WCC or the BCC. I will be considering those which have some bearing on Debates in the Church of England, between 1966 and 1996.

1.1.2 The Church *in England*

Central to this thesis is the claim that the Church of England holds in balance both Catholic and Reformed traditions. This section introduces this idea with a look at the historical background to the claim.

²⁶ Quoted in Chapman, M., *Anglicanism: A Very Short Introduction* (Blackwell, Oxford, 2006), p.4.

The birth of the Church of England is traced to the sixteenth century and the monarch of England, Henry VIII (1509–1547). However, its establishment and development took place largely during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558–1603). When Henry VIII first sought to draw clear lines of control over the Church in England, he was doing so against both the power of the Pope *and* the influence of the new Reformers: he did not want to establish a *new* Church. Pope Leo X had granted him the title ‘fidei defensor’ (Defender of the Faith) in 1521 in recognition of his book *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum* (Defence of the Seven Sacraments).²⁷ This was also known as the ‘Henrician Affirmation’ and was seen as an important opposition to the early stages of the Protestant Reformation, particularly the ideas of Martin Luther.²⁸ Yet, as I have suggested, Henry was establishing his own power against that of both the Pope and the Reformers. So, when Henry felt it had become necessary to clarify the lines of authority within the *Ecclesia Anglicana* in order to abolish Roman jurisdiction, he needed Lutheran support against the Pope and the Emperor. Thus it was that Tjernagel could write in 1965 of the English Reformation that it was ‘a Lutheran Reformation in its origins and left a Lutheran imprint on the Church of England.’²⁹ And yet, Avis remarks in his *Anglicanism and the Christian Church*, that though the Doctrine of the Reformed English Church was not regarded as differing in essentials from that of the other Reformed Churches, the English Reformers were ‘selective in what they adopted: justification by faith but not Luther’s sacramental doctrine, the freedom of a

²⁷ Following Henry's decision to break with Rome in 1530 and establish himself as head of the Church of England, the title was revoked by Pope Paul III (since Henry's act was regarded as an attack on "the Faith") and Henry was excommunicated. However, as I have already mentioned in the introduction, in 1544 Parliament conferred the title, "*Defender of the Faith*", on King Edward VI and his successors.

²⁸ Avis, P., *The Identity of Anglicanism* (T&T Clark, London, 2007), p.168. Avis refers here to the analysis of Henry VIII's contribution to theology in Bernard, G. W., *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the remaking of the English Church* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 2005), p.167.

²⁹ Tjernagel, N. S., *Henry VIII and the Lutherans: A Study in Anglo-Lutheran Relations from 1521–1547* (St Louis, 1965). Quoted in Avis, P., *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2002), p.17.

Christian man, but not Luther's pervasive dialectic of law and gospel.'³⁰ The reforms during Henry VIII's reign seemed continually to chart a middle way between Rome and the Reformers. Using, as an example, the Doctrinal Debate on the 'marks of the true church', the English Reformers evaluated the visible Church by its outward marks, which in the Debate with the Roman Catholic Church were considered to be true preaching of the word of God and the right administration of the sacraments.³¹ However, the Thirty-Nine Articles also insist that the sacraments are a real means of grace, that infant baptism is to be retained and that the unworthiness of the minister 'hinders not the effect of the Sacrament.'³²

Historians have often remarked on the tenor of the English Reformation. As R. Rex notes in his *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*: 'The truly astonishing feature of the Henrician revolution is that a manifestly unpopular and unwanted policy was imposed so successfully and with so little public disturbance.'³³ The changes wrought by Henry may have been initially unwanted, but they 'gradually and steadily made their way into popular culture...

The silent majority in rural England did not veer violently from one ecclesiastical allegiance to another as the Reformation followed its chequered course, but continued doggedly in the midstream of Christian tradition, holding as fast as possible to the central truths and continuities of practice.³⁴

³⁰ Avis, P., *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2002), p.21.

³¹ See Article XIX of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*.

³² Although the *Thirty-Nine Articles* were not published in their final form until 1571, in Elizabeth I's reign their origins can be traced to three statements of faith in the latter part of the reign of Henry VIII: the *Ten Articles* (1536), the *Institution of a Christian Man* – known as the 'Bishops' Book', (1537), and *A Necessary Doctrine and Erudition for any Christian Man* – known as the 'King's Book', (1543).

³³ Rex, R., *Henry VIII and the English Reformation* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1993), p.35.

³⁴ Avis, P., *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2002), p.7. See also his references to Maltby's work *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998), 'which has revealed the impressive extent of fierce local commitment to the Prayer Book and to a reformed episcopate by the turn of the sixteenth century.' p.6. Duffy has looked at the wills of the clergy during this period (for example, *The Stripping of the Altars*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1992, 'The impact of Reform', Chapters 14–17,

Elizabeth I, in whose reign the Church of England's identity became more developed, was concerned particularly with national cohesion and consensus, and was, therefore, more interested in theological independence than Doctrinal uniformity. This is not to say that the clergy and theologians of the time were not keenly involved in doctrinal Debates; for these characterised the English Reformation as much as European Reformation. However, what ensured that the Church of England did not become a confessing church on the lines of the Reformed Churches in Europe, were Elizabeth's own political decisions. Haugaard wrote in 1968:

Had progress in doctrine been made in 1563 as the zealous reformers anticipated, it is difficult to see how the Church of England could have provided fruitful soil for the growth of its distinctive comprehensiveness. In an age when ecclesiastical guards were busy shutting doors to theological alternatives, the Elizabethan Reformers left a remarkable number of doors ajar.³⁵

By refusing either the requirement of lay subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles, or to 'tidy up' doctrinal, liturgical and disciplinary loopholes and ambiguities, Elizabeth I allowed space, within the structures of the Church of England, for a wide range of theological opinion. The foundations of comprehensiveness, tolerance and flexibility were laid at this time.³⁶

pp.478–594.) and discovered that while aware of changes being made 'yf the laws of the realm will permit and sufer the same', priests nevertheless felt able to leave their vestments and divine breviaries 'for divine service' and also to ask for mass to be said and a 'Dirige' service, which was a series of prayers for the soul of the dead. 'The religious climate in Sussex (during the early part of Elizabeth's reign) clearly encouraged optimism.' All this as late as 1559. See Duffy, E., *The Stripping of the Altars*, (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1992/2005), pp.566–7.

³⁵ Haugaard, W. P., *Elizabeth and the English Reformation* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968), p.290. See also Duffy, E., *The Stripping of the Altars*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1992/2005), chapter 17, pp.565–593. 'The modifications in the Elizabethan prayer-book from that approved in 1552 did seem designed to soften its more starkly Protestant features' and, at the same time the reintroduction of vestments, of prayers for the dead, of saints days and of a wording at the Eucharist which allowed a Catholic interpretation of Real Presence. See Duffy, E., *The Stripping of the Altars*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1992), p.567, for example.

³⁶ In this, she may have been demonstrating 'typical English ambiguity', following in the footsteps of her father, Henry VIII, whose *Ten Articles* (1536) are described by the same scholar of the period as 'deliberately ambiguous' and 'sublimely imprecise'. (Schofield, J., *Philip Melancthon and the English Reformation* (Ashgate, Hants, 2006), pp.70, 78). Elizabeth's Archbishop of Canterbury was Matthew Parker, a moderate theologian who was in charge of the revisions made to the Book of Common Prayer

Thus, rather than being merely the result of political expediency, the Church of England can be seen as ‘a distinctive inculturated expression of the Western Catholic Church, shaped by the conciliar and reforming movements of the late Middle Ages and early modern period, to which sources the constitutional settlements under Henry and Elizabeth were subservient.’³⁷ I hope that I have begun to sketch the political background to a Church which, from its inception, saw itself as the Church *in* England, standing firmly within the continuity of tradition and charting a middle way between the Reformers of Europe and the authority of the Pope in Rome.³⁸ But what of the theology of this *Ecclesia Anglicana*? Was there a distinctively English *theology* born of the Reformation?

during Elizabeth’s reign. These revisions were careful to tread a ‘Via Media’ between the Reformed and Catholic Churches, for example, Parker dropped the prayers against the Pope during the Litany. His most famous work is *De Antiquitate Ecclesiae*, 1572.

The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography relates that from 1549, Parker came under the influence of Martin Bucer (the Strasbourg Reformer), who had been corresponding with Cranmer since 1537. At Cranmer’s invitation, Bucer was appointed Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge. Bucer’s writings were an important source of liturgical revision. He himself was heavily involved in the revision of the first Book of Common Prayer and contributed to the production of the 1550 English ordinal, the one major component of the liturgy not covered by the 1549 prayer book. Perhaps most interestingly for the subject of this thesis, he wrote a treatise of *applied* theology in 1550 (written as a gift for Edward VI) in which he set out ‘his mature vision of Christian discipleship within a loving, responsible *respublica*’. Despite its publication in Latin and French and German translations in the years immediately following, this ‘seminal treatise’ was only fully translated into English in the 1960s. See www.oxforddnb.com/Bucer. (checked July 2010).

³⁷ Avis, P., *The Identity of Anglicanism* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2007), p.168. On the subject of conciliar ecclesiology, Avis argued in 2002 (*Anglicanism and the Christian Church*) that it is possible to identify two types of Roman Catholicism in the sixteenth century, conciliar and monarchical. He goes on to demonstrate that the Church of England, whose own ecclesiology became conciliar (despite the monarch being the supreme head of the Church), was always anxious to persuade the Roman Catholic Church to hold an ecumenical Council to re-establish unity among the Churches (see the section ‘Reformation Ecumenism’ pp.23–27).

³⁸ This is the view of Avis and is backed up by a reading of the documents of the time, such as Duffy presents in 1992. However, the violence of this turbulent period of English history should not be overlooked, as Paul Collins pointed out in his review of Avis’ 2007 work ‘*The Identity of Anglicanism*’. “I suggest that Avis’ optimistic understanding of reasonable Anglicanism could be balanced with an account of the ‘dark side’ of Anglicanism typified by the 1662 exclusion from the Church of England by more than 1,700 ‘non-conformist’ ministers who were unable to accept the reimposition of the Book of Common Prayer.” Review, *Journal of Theological Studies* 70/12/2009, pp.354–6.

1.1.3 The 'Via Media'

Having agreed with Avis' suggestion that the Church of England was charting a middle way during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries I should like to develop this idea with a closer look at one particular theologian of this period.

The context and background for Anglican theologians at this time was often that of a practical (usually polemical) response to distinct problems *as well as* the attempt to define 'the very essence of Christianity', in common with so many other theologians of the Reformation period. Richard Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* is still seen as the bedrock of Anglican Theology and, as he interacted with both the Roman Catholic Church and the great Reformers, he was the first to consciously argue for a middle way (a "*Via Media*").³⁹ In Book III, he was reluctant to attack Rome: 'Notwithstanding so far as lawfully we may, we have held and do hold fellowship with them ... in like sort with Rome we are not communicate concerning sundry her gross and grievous abominations, yet touching those main parts of Christian truth wherein they constantly still persist, we gladly acknowledge them to be of the family of Jesus Christ.'⁴⁰ On the other hand, he also held John Calvin in deep respect and wrote of him: 'Two things of principal moment there are which have deservedly procured him honor throughout the world: the one his exceeding pains in composing the Institutes of Christian religion; the other his no less industrious travails for exposition of holy Scripture according to the same Institutions.'⁴¹

³⁹ Hooker, R., *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Eight books: first four published in 1594, the fifth in 1597 and the last three posthumously. 'Via Media' taken from Book III, i, 4.

⁴⁰ Hooker, R., *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book III i, 10: I, p.347.

⁴¹ Hooker, R., *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Preface ii, I:I, p.127.

However, Hooker was uncomfortable when some radical English Protestants claimed that matters of discipline and government were ‘matters necessary to salvation and of faith.’⁴² This Doctrine followed inevitably from the Puritan view of Scripture as the absolute authority for prescribing in every area of life and raised Presbyterian polity to the same level as the Doctrine of justification by faith. Hooker argued that Scripture cannot be understood entirely in terms of Revelation. There are the ‘essentials’ of Christian faith (those things necessary to Salvation) and the ‘adiaphora’, or ‘accessories’ to the Christian faith, what Avis calls ‘the point at which the Church’s teaching office decides to call a halt, the exercise of reticence and restraint.’⁴³ For those matters on which Scripture is silent, the other two legs of the stool, ‘Reason’ and ‘Tradition’ must be used to ‘fill in’ the particulars (and for Hooker, matters of Church order depended on reason rather than divine injunction).⁴⁴ Reason dictates that there is a distinction between ‘Natural Law’ and ‘Positive Law’. Natural Law belongs to the nature of things and is universal and unchangeable. Positive Law is decreed by proper authority (whether God or human) and makes things right or wrong for a particular purpose, though they remain neither good nor bad in themselves. Positive Law is designed to fit a particular situation; if the situation changes, Positive Law must be adapted. Hooker suggests that we can use Reason to determine that Scripture contains Positive as well as Natural Law, and divine Positive

⁴² Hooker, R., *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book II, I, 2: I, p.287ff. The term ‘adiaphora’ was first used in the context of ‘those things necessary for salvation’ by Philip Melanchthon, in the (1534) revised edition of his work *Loci Communes*, which he dedicated to Henry VIII. This was a book described by Luther as ‘Next to the Bible itself there is no better book and it far surpasses anything the fathers have done.’ For a fascinating discussion on Melanchthon’s influence on the English Reformation see Schofield, J., *Philip Melanchthon and the English Reformation* (Ashgate, Hants, 2006), pp.61, 83 for the above references. For his influence on Elizabeth I and the Thirty-Nine Articles, see chapter twelve, p.186ff.

⁴³ Avis, P., *The Identity of Anglicanism* (T&T Clark, London, 2007), p.49.

⁴⁴ The concept of the three-legged stool, Scripture, Tradition and Reason, is best summed up by a quotation from *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book 5.VIII.2: ‘Be it in matter of the one kind or of the other, what Scripture doth plainly deliver, to that the first place both of credit and obedience is due; the next whereunto is whatsoever any man can necessarily conclude by force of reason; after this the Church succeedeth that which the Church by her ecclesiastical authority shall probably think and define to be true or good, must in congruity of reason overrule all other inferior judgements whatsoever.’

Laws are no exception to their kind: some of them may be changed by proper authority. All supernatural laws are Positive Laws. Some are immutable, because their ‘matter’ does not vary: for example, the sacraments. Some are mutable because their ‘matter’ alters with the circumstances: for example, the outward government of the Church. This was not seen as a radical new kind of theology, but simply as a ‘method’ to apply to contested issues of the day.⁴⁵ It was a method to distinguish issues of faith from issues of order, issues of Doctrine from issues of polity. Avis wrote in 2002:

Anglicanism (I use this strictly anachronistic term deliberately) for Hooker was a method as well as an institution. Hooker’s method, with its distinctive hermeneutic of Scripture, reason and the living tradition of the Church...enabled him to defend the English Church, catholic and reformed, episcopal and conciliar, national and ecumenical, successfully against all comers.⁴⁶

Avis later describes this *Via Media* not as a bland compromise but as a struggle for survival:

Following the middle way was like walking a tightrope over an abyss. The ideal of moderation was not a lazy, relaxed alternative but an escape route passionately pursued. At the time of the Restoration Joseph Glanville claimed: ‘We are freed from the idolatries, superstition and corruption of the Roman Church on the one hand; and clear from the vanities and enthusiasms that have overspread some Protestant churches on the other.’ Later in the next century, the *Via Media* became assimilated to the classical ideals, espoused by the Enlightenment, of balance, proportion and harmony and blended with the fashionable notion of ‘politeness’.⁴⁷

This notion of theology as *method* is central to the school of Practical Theology and so Martyn Percy says in his 2005 work: ‘Practical Theology, at its richest, is a form of

⁴⁵ The occasion which initiated the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity was a debate with his colleague at Temple Church, Walter Travers. Travers had received Presbyterian ordination at Antwerp in 1578 and had subsequently refused episcopal ordination in the Church of England. See Eppley, D., ‘Richard Hooker’ in *The Reformation Theologians*, (Blackwell, Oxford, 2002), Chapter 17, p.257.

⁴⁶ Avis, P., *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2002), p.31.

⁴⁷ Walsh, J., C. Haydon and S. Taylor, eds, *The Church of England c.1689–1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993) p.58, quoted in Avis, P., *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2002), p.62.

thinking that allows a range of methods to come together, to be “tested” by the issues they are addressing, and for some degree of critical fusion to emerge.’⁴⁸ Hooker’s method, with its distinctive three-fold hermeneutic (Scripture, Reason and Tradition) was born from the experience of having to defend the English Church: this was the *context* in which he wrote.⁴⁹ However, while his method and engagement with his own context offer evidence for Anglican Theology as Practical Theology, Hooker was also always deeply rooted in Scripture, Reason and Tradition and it is this hermeneutic which gives Anglican Practical Theology a particular depth, which I will argue has sometimes been lacking in the field of Practical Theology. So, by making this link and defining Anglican Theology as Practical Theology, I am identifying the element of ‘Experience’ within a particular context as an important part of the hermeneutic of Scripture, Reason and Tradition; and as I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I hope to begin to trace the relationship between these four. By ‘Experience’, I mean the living reality of those parishioners of the Established Church who find themselves faced with questions which do not seem to be easily answered by Scripture, Reason or Tradition: in the material with which this thesis is concerned, for example, ‘how can I be a faithful Christian and worship at a service whose liturgy does not mention Jesus Christ?’

I have shown how the Church of England began as a political and ecclesial response to questions of authority in Rome and also how the first theology of the Church of England was concerned with a practical response to distinct problems within England. I have suggested that the Church of England did not see itself as a separate Church,

⁴⁸ See Percy, M., *Engaging with Contemporary Culture* (Ashgate, Hants, 2005) p.10ff ‘Practical Theology as Methodology.’ p.11.

⁴⁹ ‘...theological norms arise out of the context in which one is called to live out one’s faith.’ Caribbean theologian Kortright Davis, quoted in Percy, M., *Engaging with Contemporary Culture* (Ashgate, Hants, 2005), p.13.

but rather as the ‘Reformed Catholic Church’, charting a middle way between the Reformers and the authority of the Pope in Rome. So, how does the Church of England understand itself today?

1.1.4 A ‘Provisional’ Church?

The first element of the Church of England’s self-understanding that has an impact on its theology is that there has always been a sense in which the Church of England is ‘provisional’; ‘radically provisional’, according to one twentieth-century Archbishop of Canterbury (Robert Runcie):

We must never make the survival of the Anglican Communion an end in itself. The Churches of the Anglican Communion have never claimed to be more than a part of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Anglicanism has a radically provisional character which we must never allow to be obscured.⁵⁰

The roots of this idea have already been traced in the section on the history of the Church *in* England, where I offered the arguments of some Church historians that Henry VIII did not intend to establish a new Reforming, Confessional Church. Another Archbishop of Canterbury of the twentieth century, Michael Ramsey, commented:

The Anglican will not suppose that he has a system or a Confession that can be defined or commended side by side with those of others; indeed, the use of the word ‘Anglicanism’ can be very misleading. Rather will he claim that his tasks look beyond ‘isms’ to the Gospel of God and to the Catholic Church.⁵¹

This approach begs the question of whether one can say that there *is* such a thing as an ‘Anglican Theology’ at all. Since the middle of the twentieth century there has

⁵⁰ Robert Runcie in his opening address to the 1988 Lambeth Conference, entitled ‘The Nature of the Unity We Seek.’ See *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Reports, Resolutions and Pastoral Letters from the Bishops at The Lambeth Conference 1988* (Church House Publishing, London, 1988), p.13.

⁵¹ Ramsey, A. M., ‘What is Anglican Theology?’ (*Theology* 48, 1945), p.6.

been a movement of those who argue that there is not. Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher said in 1951 ‘We have no doctrine of our own – we only possess the Catholic doctrine of the Catholic Church enshrined in the Catholic creeds, and those creeds we hold without addition or diminution.’⁵² Bishop Stephen Neill echoed this in 1965 when he wrote:

There are no special Anglican doctrines, there is no particular Anglican theology. The Church of England is the Catholic Church in England. It teaches all the doctrines of the Catholic Faith, as these are found in Holy Scripture, as they are summarized in the Apostles’, the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds, and set forth in the dogmatic decisions of the first four General Councils of the undivided Church.⁵³

In Sykes’ book, *The Study of Anglicanism*, the Doctrine of the Church is treated under the subheading ‘The Doctrine of the Church as interpreted by the Church of England.’⁵⁴ This subheading is a neat summary of the difficulties the Church of England has had with the question of Doctrine. However, in 1988, Bishop Stephen Sykes rejected the notion that Anglicans have no special Doctrines, with some vigour, in his book *Unashamed Anglicanism*.⁵⁵ As early as 1978, Sykes was criticising this position in an attempt to ‘preserve the Anglican Church from a state of muddle and to

⁵² Quoted from Podmore, C., *Aspects of Anglican Identity* (Church House Publishing, London, 2005), p.38. Geoffrey Fisher was giving a speech to a meeting marking his return from a tour of Australia and New Zealand, Westminster Central Hall, 30 Jan. 1951, and this was quoted in Church Times, 2 Feb. 1951, p.1.

⁵³ Neill, S., *Anglicanism* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1965), p.417. The theologian, John Macquarrie, has supported this position as well. See Macquarrie, J., ‘What still separates us from the Catholic Church? An Anglican reply.’ (*Concilium* 4/6 April, 1970), p.45.

⁵⁴ Thomas, P.E., ‘Doctrine of the Church’ in (eds) Sykes, S., and Booty, J., *The Study of Anglicanism* (SPCK, London, 1988/1993), p.223.

⁵⁵ ‘Anglicanism and the doctrine of the church’ in Sykes, S., *Unashamed Anglicanism* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1995), pp.101–21. “It is the sole purpose of this part of the essay to show that the NSD claim is fallacious...It emerges as a thoroughly confused and confusing piece of Anglican apologia whose paradoxical purpose was to distinguish Anglicanism from all other denominations and one of whose astonishing consequences has been to create a view of the catholicity of the Church private to Anglicans. It is of no small consequence to disabuse our minds of this venerable absurdity.” p.103.

restore its vigour and integrity.’⁵⁶ He argued strongly for the need for an ‘internal coherence’ in the Church of England, which he believed would come from careful consideration of an *Anglican Systematic Theology*.⁵⁷ He argued that those who say that Anglicans have ‘no special doctrines’ (he called this the NSD claim) adhere to what he termed ‘a mathematical interpretation’:

namely that whereas Eastern Orthodoxy professes doctrines A,B,C,D and E,F,G,H, and Roman Catholicism professes doctrines A,B,C,D,E,F,G,H and I,J,K,L, Anglicans profess merely A,B,C and D. Protestant denominations are, on this analogy, sometimes represented as affirming more than the basic quantity of doctrines, for example...Calvinists on double predestination...On this gloss of the NSD claim, Anglicanism turns out, somewhat paradoxically, to be ‘mere Christianity’, unhyphenated Catholicism without omission of anything essential or addition of anything inessential.⁵⁸

Sykes is arguing both that there *is* already such a thing as Anglican Doctrine(s) and also that there should be more of it:

Even though doctrines A to D are affirmed, and even though these doctrines may be held in common with all other Churches, the affirming of these doctrines to be sufficient entails a further doctrine, M, which can only take the form of an Anglican doctrine of the Church. But this doctrine could not, by definition, be common to other bodies, except those which defined the Church’s doctrines in precisely the same way. Anglicans, therefore, must have at least one special doctrine of their own.

On the mathematical metaphor, some denominations hold a larger, and some a small body of propositions. All denominations are therefore obliged to justify their own claims by showing: a) that their view of the extent of Christian doctrine is a sufficient expression of the catholic faith and b) that their denomination has

⁵⁶ Quotation taken from the flyleaf publicity of Sykes, S., *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (Mowbray, Oxford, 1978).

⁵⁷ Sykes, S., *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (Mowbray, Oxford, 1978) Introduction, p.xiv. Sykes was, at the time, Van Mildert Professor of Divinity at Durham. He became a member of the Doctrine Commission in 1990, working on *The Mystery of Salvation* and then, in 1996, he became Chairman of the Doctrine Commission, working on the 2003 Report *Being Human*.

⁵⁸ ‘Anglicanism and the doctrine of the church’ in Sykes, S., *Unashamed Anglicanism* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1995), p.103.

the authority to declare that body of doctrine to be the full expression of the catholic faith.

It is time that we grew up enough theologically to realise that there is a dispute between the denominations about what the catholicity of the Church signifies, and that if we, as Anglicans, have a view worth considering on this matter, we must take the risk of advancing an Anglican doctrine of the Church.⁵⁹

Avis agrees with this argument and puts a strong case for a distinctively Anglican ecclesiology in both his books *Anglicanism and the Christian Church*, and *The Identity of Anglicanism*.⁶⁰ He writes:

This limitation is probably true of Anglican doctrine as a whole: its character is to say what is necessary to keep the faithful on the road to salvation, and little more ... It is a pastoral and practical creed, and to that extent, it is pragmatic in character. It is concerned with what works in the Christian life and in the life of the community; it is focused on doing the job.⁶¹

Avis' use of 'pastoral', 'practical' and 'pragmatic' raises, once again, the possibility that what may be distinctive about Anglicanism is the *method* it uses to understand theological questions which have been raised by practical issues of church order; Anglican Theology as Practical Theology. This is not to say that it is method alone that makes Anglican Theology distinctive but that, as with Latin American Liberation Theology of the 1970s, it is the *method* which leads to a very different theological perspective and ultimately, as both Sykes and Avis would argue, a perspective that can be defined as distinctively Anglican.⁶²

⁵⁹ 'Anglicanism and the doctrine of the church' in Sykes, S., *Unashamed Anglicanism* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1995), pp.103, 106, 104, 109.

⁶⁰ Avis, P., *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2002), p.321ff. Avis, P., *The Identity of Anglicanism* (T&T Clark, London, 2007), Chapter III, p.39ff.

⁶¹ Avis, P., *The Identity of Anglicanism* (T&T Clark, London, 2007), p.81.

⁶² Liberation Theology began as a movement of theologically-educated priests living alongside the poor and reading the Scriptures from the perspective of the poor. When these priests began writing theology (eg: Gutiérrez, G., *A Theology of Liberation*, SCM, London, 1972), their theology was shaped by the methodological approach of the Preferential Option for the Poor. See Berryman, P., *Liberation Theology* (Pantheon, New York, 1987), chapter 5 'Feet on the Ground: From Experience to Theology', pp.80–5.

1.1.5 Anglican Doctrine?

Sykes, however, is more specific than Avis: he believes that in selecting what is ‘sufficient for salvation’, Hooker, Jewell and Cranmer established a Doctrinal framework for the Church of England.⁶³ He defines Doctrine as ‘the elucidation of a document or documents specific and fundamental to a denomination’⁶⁴ and goes on to argue that the Thirty-Nine Articles provide the essential (though not complete) list for such Doctrines.⁶⁵ While he accepts that the formularies were not written as a ‘Confession’, they are nevertheless a specifically Anglican corpus of Doctrine. More than this, when Sykes offers his own ‘doctrine of the Church’, it is to these formularies that he turns:

In terms of a doctrine of the Church, what are they? They are first and foremost a way of ordering the worship of the people of God. In other words they resolve the problem of potential disorder in worship, a phenomenon already known in the churches of St Paul. Disorder includes not merely unruly conduct but also discrepant conviction ... this is where the importance of common worship according to an authorised text is so significant. For prayer is not in the analytic mode. It contains doctrine but *it does not insist on resolving ambiguity*...Unity in prayer and praise is qualitatively different from the discursive unity of doctrinal formulation.⁶⁶

This is the emphasis with which Sykes wishes to begin his understanding of Doctrine: those things which give the Church of England a distinctive voice in the field of ecclesiology. However, Colin Podmore in *Aspects of Anglican Identity* does not agree that the traditional documents of the Church of England offer a distinctive (doctrinal)

⁶³ Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556) was the Archbishop of Canterbury during the reign of Henry VIII and Edward VI. He was the chief compiler of the Book of Common Prayer. John Jewel (1522–1571) was Bishop of Salisbury and wrote the first theological justification for the Elizabethan Settlement, emphasising the Church of England’s claim to antiquity. His *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae* was published in 1562.

⁶⁴ Sykes, S., *Unashamed Anglicanism* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1995), p.109.

⁶⁵ ‘Anglicanism and the doctrine of the church’ in Sykes, S., *Unashamed Anglicanism* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1995), p.177.

⁶⁶ Sykes, S., *Unashamed Anglicanism* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1995), p.116. Emphasis my own.

difference.⁶⁷ Rather, he argues that it is the difference only in ‘method’ (which Percy has suggested is the basis of Practical Theology) that makes Anglican Theology distinctive. He quotes both Michael Ramsey and H. R. McAdoo:

Ramsey argued that ‘there is such a thing as Anglican theology’, but that ‘it is neither a system nor a confession (the idea of an Anglican “confessionalism” suggests something that never has been and never can be) but a method, a use and a direction.’ Bishop (later Archbishop) H. R. McAdoo echoed this assessment: there is a distinctively Anglican theological ethos, and that distinctiveness lies in method rather than in content’, but ‘There is no specifically Anglican corpus of doctrine.’⁶⁸

With Sykes’ first reference point being that of the Book of Common Prayer, it is not impossible to see his understanding of Anglican Doctrine as growing out of the liturgy and practice of the Anglican Church; in other words, that the method of arriving at Doctrine is what is distinctive, a method which has its origins in Hooker’s *adiaphora*: that in areas not sufficient for Salvation the silence of the formularies is eloquent.⁶⁹

This view is echoed by Peter Toon:

In drawing up and imposing the Articles the purpose of Cranmer and his colleagues was fourfold. They wanted to ensure that the Church of England was an apostolic Church in the sense that it taught apostolic doctrine; they desired to ensure that the clergy would be sound in their teaching and thus not expose the laity to unorthodox (radical or Roman) teachings; they wanted to have genuine unity within the Church; and they wished to set the perimeters of a comprehensiveness based upon the gospel...In the effort to set forth Reformed Catholicity, the writers of the Articles set aside troublesome views being propagated by the active sectarians (‘Anabaptists’), by the traditional Romanists and by the growing band of Puritans...The Articles are certainly not ambiguous (when interpreted historically and contextually) but they are minimal in their requirements, leaving many secondary questions open. Bishop John Pearson rightly claimed

⁶⁷ Podmore, C., *Aspects of Anglican Identity* (Church House Publishing, London, 2005), p.36, for example.

⁶⁸ Quoted from Podmore, C., *Aspects of Anglican Identity* p.39. Michael Ramsey reference ‘What is Anglican Theology?’, p.2 and McAdoo reference *The Spirit of Anglicanism: A Survey of Anglican Theological Method in the Seventeenth Century* (A&C Black, London, 1965), p.1.

⁶⁹ Avis, P., *The Identity of Anglicanism* (T&T Clark, London, 2007), p.50.

in 1660 that: “the book of Articles is not, nor is pretended to be, a complete book of divinity... but an enumeration of some truths, which upon, and since, the Reformation have been denied by some persons; who upon denial are thought unfit to have any cure of souls in this Church or realm ...”⁷⁰

The Doctrine of the Church of England, based on the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Book of Common Prayer, is indeed distinctive in what it affirms and what it rejects, when compared to the Roman Catholic or Reformed Churches of the time; but in particular, it is distinctive because it appears that the purpose of Doctrine is to define truth in a deliberately apophatic way. The reason for this is traced back to the historical roots of a Church which wanted to be *the Church in England*, whilst allowing for differences of conscience. The outcome is a Doctrinal approach which allows for a holding-in-tension of theological perspectives which in the Reformation appeared to be incompatible. In this thesis, I will be illustrating points of Doctrine with case studies from the Theology of Religious Pluralism and so two examples I mention now are the Doctrine of ‘no salvation outside the Church’ and the Doctrine of the saving grace of Christ outside the Church. These two Doctrinal positions have been identified by Race as the essence of ‘exclusivism’ and ‘inclusivism’ respectively. The Church of England in the sixteenth century was not concerned with other religions but it was concerned with Christian pluralism and with National Unity. So, if we turn to the Thirty-Nine Articles we can see that the Church of England looked to Christ for salvation on the one hand,⁷¹ but it did not try to define too tightly what ‘belonging’ meant.⁷² This is what was meant by Hooker’s ‘Via Media’ and it

⁷⁰ Toon, P., ‘The Articles and Homilies’ in Sykes, S., and Booty, J., (eds) *The Study of Anglicanism* (SPCK, London, 1988), pp.136–7. The quotation from Pearson is taken from Pearson, J., *Minor Theological Works* ed. W. Churton (1844), vol ii, p.215.

⁷¹ *Thirty-Nine Articles*, XVIII, ‘Of obtaining eternal Salvation only by the Name of Christ’: ‘They also are to be had accursed that presume to say, That every man shall be saved by the Law or Sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that Law, and the Light of Nature. For Holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.’

⁷² *Thirty-Nine Articles*, XXXIV, ‘Of the Traditions of the Church’: ‘It is not necessary that the Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like; for at all times they have been divers,

laid the foundations for a theological approach that I will demonstrate was apparent in the Reports and Debates on other religions at the end of the twentieth century.

So, Doctrine in the Church of England (or ‘that which is taught’) is the main body of teaching of the Catholic Church⁷³ as found in the Formularies (Thirty-Nine Articles, Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal). It is based on Scripture, Reason and Tradition but it is also always influenced by the *experience* of being the National Church and the necessity for ‘Positive Law’ which that often raises. In essence, the Doctrinal position of the Church of England is *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*, the Law of Prayer is the Law of Belief.⁷⁴ Thus, at a time of religious ferment in Europe, Cranmer included this prayer into the daily office (Morning Prayer):

O God, the Creator and Preserver of all mankind, we humbly beseech thee for all sorts and conditions of men; that thou wouldst be pleased to make thy ways known unto them, thy saving health unto all nations. More especially, we pray for the good estate of the Catholic Church; that it may be so guided and governed by thy good Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.⁷⁵

and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times and men’s manners, so that nothing be ordained against God’s Word.’

⁷³ So, the quotation from Archbishop Fisher referred to earlier, ‘We have no doctrine of our own - we only possess the Catholic doctrine of the Catholic Church.’ See p.33.

⁷⁴ ‘Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi’ refers to the relationship between worship and belief. It is an ancient Christian principle which provided a measure for developing the Creeds, the Canon of Scripture and other Doctrinal matters based on the Church’s liturgy. In the Early Church there were about 69 years of liturgical tradition before there was a creed and about 350 years before there was a biblical canon. These liturgical traditions provided the theological framework for establishing the creeds and the canon. ‘Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi’ is an early example of orthopraxis as a constitutive element of orthodoxy and means that it is quite natural for Anglicans to allow practical, local issues to inform their Doctrine. See de Clerck, P., ‘Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi: The Original Sense and Historical Avatars of an Equivocal Adage’, in *Studia Liturgica* 24, (1994), pp.178–200.

⁷⁵ Book of Common Prayer, 1549 edition, ‘Collect for All Conditions of Men’. This Collect was kept unchanged and is still found in the 1662 edition.

There is a natural ‘inclusivism’ in this prayer, for ‘all sorts and conditions of men’, for ‘all who profess and call themselves Christians’ and for ‘faith in the unity of the spirit’. This principle of inclusiveness found in Scripture, Reason, Tradition and Experience, can be illustrated by looking to the work of the Doctrine Commissions during the period I am investigating (1966–1996). Typical of the Anglican approach is that ‘the principle that rationality and inspiration are not incompatible’ and on this basis, members of the Commission who wrote the Report *We Believe in the Holy Spirit* comment that:

we stand in that Anglican tradition of which Hooker is the most celebrated exponent. Thus scripture is our supreme authority; scripture is properly understood within the Church. On questions to which scripture does not address itself, the Church may develop the teaching of scripture, so long as it does not contradict scripture...It will become clear that we are persuaded that understanding of the Spirit, knowledge of the world, and engagement in prayer and worship go hand in hand.⁷⁶

In 1981, the Doctrine Commission had said of Scripture that ‘it is the one part of the tradition which all groups within Anglicanism acknowledge as authoritative.’⁷⁷ This Report, *Believing in the Church* looked at Doctrine from the perspective of the worshipping community. The Report believed that ‘the ultimate authority for Doctrine’ had to come from Scripture⁷⁸ but it did not draw the conclusion that there can be only one consolidated interpretation of Scripture. The divergence of opinion about the interpretation of Scripture has, of course, given rise to fierce argument (‘it is more difficult for religious believers to agree to differ when what is at stake is the character of saving truth’⁷⁹), but the authors believed that it was the Anglican experience of corporate worship which contextualises the divergences. ‘Believing is

⁷⁶ *We Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Church House Publishing, London, 1991), p.144.

⁷⁷ *Believing in the Church* (SPCK, London, 1981), p.281.

⁷⁸ *Believing in the Church* (SPCK, London, 1981), p.30.

⁷⁹ *Believing in the Church* (SPCK, London, 1981), p.16.

response to a story, expressed in worship, service and evangelism.’⁸⁰ The sixteenth-century relationship between Scripture, Tradition and Reason and the way in which the Church of England uses its worship and prayer as a framework for these three is explained in the Introduction to *Believing in the Church*:

In this inquiry we understand tradition to be more than the deposit of past convictions and formulations. We see it as a still continuing process of corporate believing, a patrimony to be re-invested in each generation. We suggest that the corporate belief of a community provides the necessary matrix for the emergence of personal creeds.⁸¹

This way of doing theology was re-emphasised in the 1987 Report, *We Believe in God*,⁸² when the Chapter ‘Roots in the Tradition’ considers the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople before turning to ‘the public prayer of the Church’, where God as Trinity in the Eucharist is addressed: ‘we are brought into the presence of God through Christ by the Holy Spirit’.⁸³ The discussion of God as Trinity by the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England takes place using illustrations from Justin Martyr, Origen and Basil the Great, all within the context of Byzantine liturgy. In a move which has long been familiar within the Orthodox Church but is also profoundly Anglican, discussion of God is treated through prayer and liturgy, through ‘call and obedience’, the ‘obedience of service’ and the ‘obedience to the holy’. These are the very emphases of Hooker which are so illustrative of Anglican Theology: God is known and understood through service, through worship and through prayer. In this way, the tension between what is inherited and what is ‘not said’ (Hooker’s *adiaphora*), which changes with each new era, does not become destructive but can

⁸⁰ *Believing in the Church* (SPCK, London, 1981), p.33.

⁸¹ *Believing in the Church* (SPCK, London, 1981), p.2.

⁸² *We Believe in God* (Church House Publishing, London, 1987).

⁸³ *We Believe in God* (Church House Publishing, London, 1987), p.92.

be seen as a ‘constant Dialogue’ or a ‘conversation’.⁸⁴ The approach used by the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England is one which, in 1987 as in the sixteenth century, Scripture, Reason and Tradition are in perpetual conversation. The theological methodology of the Church of England is rooted first in Scripture but will always move from this to ecclesiology as it is the ordered Church which has the power to decide on those matters on which Scripture is silent.

I have begun to argue that the way in which the Church of England *does* theology traces its roots to its inception during the Reformation. This is the first identification of a strand of ‘orthopraxis’ which I intend to draw out of later analysis of the Reports and Debates of the General Synod. I have already mentioned the term ‘orthopraxis’ in the context of the early Church (*Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi*) and more recently it has been used in contrast to ‘Orthodoxy’, most famously in the Debate between Cardinal Ratzinger of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith⁸⁵ and the Liberation Theologians, Gutiérrez and Boff. Liberation Theology in Latin America and its contemporary in the USA, James Cone’s ‘Black Theology’, can be identified as part of the twentieth-century paradigm shift towards praxis-based theology.⁸⁶ What I am hoping to demonstrate is that this ‘inculturated, contextual’ approach, in which the hermeneutical object of interpretation is the practical situation itself, is something that the Church of England has been doing for nearly five hundred years.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ *We Believe in God* (Church House Publishing, London, 1987), p.12.

⁸⁵ Hereafter, CDF.

⁸⁶ Gutiérrez, G., *A Theology of Liberation* (SCM, London, 1974). Boff, L., *Jesus Christ, Liberator*. First published in 1971 but translated into English in 1978 (Maryknoll, New York, Orbis, 1978). These were the ground-breaking books in Liberation Theology in Latin America while in the USA, a similar work was published by Cone, J., *God of the Oppressed* (Seabury Press, New York, 1975).

⁸⁷ “...the contemporary concern to make Christian theology and Christian practice interdependent in a Christian ‘praxis’ was at least prefigured in the crucial liturgical experimentation which marked Anglicanism from its beginnings.” Taylor Stevenson, W., ‘Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi’ in (ed) Sykes and Booty *The Study of Anglicanism* (SPCK, London, 1988/1993), p.175.

The Church of England is not a confessional faith, as Lutheranism is, with its considerable body of official Doctrine, including polemics, gathered together in the Book of Concord.⁸⁸ However, because it is neither confessional nor scholastic and lacks a strong magisterium, the relationship between the ‘universal’ Church and the different ‘local’ expressions of the Church of England is never uncomplicated as we shall see when we turn to the Reports and Debates concerning matters of Religious Pluralism. For this reason I believe that it may be helpful at this point to consider the question of authority in relationship to Doctrine, to illustrate the very particular nature of Anglican ‘Doctrine’.

1.1.6 Doctrine and Authority

There is no doubt that one of the problems which any scholar of Anglican Doctrine comes up against is the question of authority in the Church of England. It is not easy to accept that in an Apostolic and Episcopal Church there is no single authority figure, nor an infallible corpus of Doctrine to which scholars and priests can turn. In Henry VIII’s reign *The Bishops’ Book* of 1537 and *The King’s Book* of 1543 both referred to the Christian Church as a mixed society, parts of which could err and go into heresy and schism without ceasing to belong to the visible Church. Avis identifies the ‘adiaphora’, or ‘freedom in non-essentials’ as the ‘key to understanding the distinctiveness of Anglicanism’. He refers to it as an ‘integrated, organic,

⁸⁸ Avis, P., *The Identity of Anglicanism* (T&T Clark, London, 2007), p.155. By this, Anglican theologians are making the point that there is no founding theologian from which the Church of England takes its name, like Lutheranism, Calvinism or Zwinglianism. See also Taylor Stevenson, W., ‘Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi’ in (ed) Sykes and Booty *The Study of Anglicanism* (SPCK, London, 1988/1993), p.175. ‘The pre-eminent theologian who is identifiably Anglican is Richard Hooker, whose late sixteenth-century Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity is respected but has never been definitive or influential in any systematic way. What has been definitive for Anglicanism, from its inception in the sixteenth century until the present day, is the Book of Common Prayer.

incarnational approach.’⁸⁹ Martyn Percy, in 2005, raised the Anglican tradition of ‘loyal dissent’, in the context of discussion about how Orthodox Doctrine is created:

[in the Anglican Communion] the lines of authority are not as clear as those enjoyed by other denominations. In some provinces it is possible to be doctrinally deviant or innovative (depending on your point of view), but removal from office (say, as a priest) is only possible when canon law has been breached. Anglican ecclesiology...protects the liberty of individual conscience to a remarkable degree.⁹⁰

Percy traces this tradition back to the theologians of the sixteenth centuries.⁹¹ He believes that an ecclesiology which allows for ‘those traditions that press, probe and question the identity and boundaries of Anglicanism’ have often nourished and enriched the Church at the same time: ‘Sometimes the art of practical ecclesiology is in retaining rebellion, not in silencing it.’⁹²

So, Anglican Theology is Practical Theology, written for a particular place and a particular time. Like Practical Theology, ‘there is no one universal definition’ of

⁸⁹ Avis, P., *The Identity of Anglicanism* (T&T Clark, London, 2007), p.51.

⁹⁰ Percy, M., *Engaging with Contemporary Culture: Christianity, Theology and the Concrete Church* (Ashgate, Hants, 2005), pp.224, 226.

⁹¹ Percy, M., *Engaging with Contemporary Culture* (Ashgate, Hants, 2005), p.226.

⁹² Percy, M., *Engaging with Contemporary Culture* (Ashgate, Hants, 2005), p.226. To illustrate the point, we might turn to the matter of doctrinal discipline of priests. Who is in charge of matters of doctrine? Who decides when the line has been overstepped? The legal answer is that decisions are made by the Diocesan Bishop and will include careful consideration of whether the individuals have broken Canon Law, what the state of their own conscience is and the Bishop’s pastoral concern for the individuals. Don Cupitt, the liberal theologian and priest, has been employed by the University of Cambridge since 1962. This has meant that he works outside the Church of England; and, in response to public calls for his resignation of Orders, it is pointed out that as he has not taken any services since 1990, he needs no permission to officiate. Revd Dr. Michael Goulder, who contributed to *The Myth of God Incarnate*, voluntarily resigned his Orders because his intellectual integrity could not reconcile natural disasters with belief in a God of love. More recently, Revd David Hart, of the Diocese of Ely has *not* had his permission to officiate rescinded despite admitting his conversion to Hinduism in 2006. ‘I have neither explicitly nor implicitly renounced my Christian faith or priesthood’, he said in an interview with the *Church Times* on 11 September 2006. This story first appeared in the *Times* newspaper, 8 September 2006, with a picture of The Revd Hart offering prayers to Ganesh.

Anglican Theology but ‘this open-endedness and unresolvedness may be a distinctive identifying feature’⁹³ of it.

How does this flexible ecclesiology work in practice? Is it reasonable to frame it as a distinctive *method*? A look at some recent examples of Church ‘governance’ sheds some light on the matter. When the Church of England’s Doctrine Committee was established in 1921 under William Temple, their long-awaited Report of 1938 revealed both the huge variety of opinion within the Church of England and also a lack of uniformity.⁹⁴ This has remained true of almost every theological Report written within the Church of England; and considering the range of theological perspectives of those who sit on these committees, it is not surprising. This is what is distinctive about the Anglican *method*. The Church of England goes out of its way to appoint leading theologians from among the evangelical wing, the catholic wing and the liberal wing of the Church, onto every committee which is producing a theological Report. It did this for the newly established Doctrine Commission in 1921 and has

⁹³ Woodward, J., and Pattison, S., (eds) *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Blackwell, Oxford, 2000), pp.4, 76.

⁹⁴ *Doctrine in the Church of England: The Report of the Commission on Christian Doctrine* (1938, and reprinted by SPCK, London, 1982). It is interesting that this first Report was entitled *Doctrine in the Church of England* (emphasis my own). The Commission denied that it claimed to be the Doctrine of the Church of England (see introduction p.2). The Doctrine Commission was first established in 1921 and its work since then has been taken on at the request of the Archbishop. It is not a permanent body, and cannot be compared to the CDF in the Roman Catholic Church, meeting as it does only for a particular assignment. However, it has provided an important and useful service to the Church in gathering the greatest minds of the Church together to consider issues which the fast-moving pace of social change, scientific and technological development of the twentieth century raised for ordinary Christians. During the historical period which I am covering in this thesis (1966–1996), the Doctrine Commission wrote five Reports: *Christian Believing: The Nature of the Christian Faith and its Expression in Holy Scripture and Creeds* (1976), *Believing in the Church: the Corporate Nature of Faith* (1981), *We Believe in God* (1987), *We Believe in the Holy Spirit* (1991) and *The Mystery of Salvation* (1995). The first two were responses to the crisis of faith initiated by the John Robinson debate within the Church and the rise of analytical philosophy outside the Church. The next three dealt specifically with articles of faith from the Creeds which had been analysed in *Christian Believing*.

continued to do so ever since.⁹⁵ Doctrine in the Church of England is seen as a *process* in which all members are involved:⁹⁶

...the term 'Anglican' has become a cipher for linking a series of opposites or polarities, that in turn express its diversity... Solid, yet flexible; strong, yet yielding; open, yet composed; inclusive, yet identifiable... Anglican identity only begins to make proper sense when it is related to its mirror image or opposite number. No one wing or facet of the church can begin to be true without relation to its contrary expression... There has not been a single century in which Anglicanism has not wrestled with its identity; it is by nature a polity that draws in a variety of competing theological traditions. Its very appeal lies in its own distinctive hybridity; strength, not weakness comes from diversity... Godly compromise and inclusiveness is part of our (Anglican) polity's soul ... our genius as a church lies in our incompleteness and contestability ... we are a church that is on the *viaticum* – still becoming.⁹⁷

Returning again to Sykes' suggestion that Doctrine may be found in the various Books of Common Prayer of the Anglican Communion, David Stancliffe⁹⁸ wrote that:

...our liturgy is ordered, not regimented and it is related to how we think and how we live. Anglican liturgy, like Anglican life is marked by an inclusive unity rather than an exclusive uniformity

⁹⁵ The 1938 Commission wrote of 'the deliberate task of creating a synthesis out of different positions.' *Doctrine in the Church of England* (SPCK, London, 1938), p.19. Stephen Sykes gives an insight into the process behind this method when he writes of 'the sometimes arduous activity of formulating a view on a central matter of Christian doctrine under the scrutiny of a dozen highly intelligent theological colleagues adds something substantial to the corporate character of church doctrine. One has to be ready to sacrifice favourite theses and idiosyncrasies to achieve an agreed outcome. Technical terms and jargon are dissected for hidden unclarities. Matters one had not considered, or if considered, dismissed, have to be appraised and reappraised. And, as always in the Church, it becomes swiftly apparent that nothing works without love.' *Contemporary Doctrine Classics* (Church House Publishing, London, 2005), pp.xxxiii–iv.

⁹⁶ '...it cannot be the task of a Doctrine Commission to capture this process in a still shot, and to say "This you may (or must) believe." The Commission's work is part of the process itself, and its claim on the attention of church members is not that it has been given special authority to define doctrine, but rather that it has been asked to report and comment on the present state of our Church's wrestling with the tradition we have received, and to do so in the light of recent developments in theology and of the insights and challenges offered by the world today.' *We Believe in God* (SPCK, London, 1987), p.16.

⁹⁷ Martyn, P., *Sketching Communion: A paper for the Lambeth Conference 2008* (Draft Copy), December 2007, pp.5, 7, 12.

⁹⁸ Bishop of Salisbury, 1993–2010. Chairman of the Liturgical Commission, 1993–2005.

and it is this inclusive quality which gives it its capacity for growth.’⁹⁹

This ‘distinctive hybridity’ is not systematised into formal documents and it is a difficult process indeed to discover the ‘authoritative statements’ of an ‘incomplete’ and ‘provisional’ Church. But the work that I have referred to, of Sykes, Avis and Stancliffe, show that Anglican Theology is to be found in hymnody and in liturgy and in the works of Anglican spirituality as well as the formal expressions of Anglican identity. In the 1987 Doctrine Commission Report, the authors stated that, ‘God is known, primarily and characteristically, in the shared worship, experience and reflection of men and women who meet in his name and serve him in the world.’¹⁰⁰

Thus, one of the premises of this thesis is that as there is no magisterium in the Church of England, ‘authority’ is found in a variety of places: some in the liturgy of the Church of England, some in the voices of those on the various Doctrine Commissions, some among the leading Clergy and Laity of the General Synod. There are indeed many remarkable Anglican theologians whose work has contributed to the Debate about Religious Pluralism. Historically, F.D. Maurice and William Temple’s work on social justice have made an impact on the way Anglicans understand their role in British society.¹⁰¹ At the time when the Church of England was considering

⁹⁹ Stevenson, K., and Spinks, B., (eds), *The Study of Anglican Worship* (Mowbray, London, 1991), p.132.

¹⁰⁰ *We Believe in God* (Church House Publishing, London, 1987), p.47. At the same time as this Report was being written, the finishing touches had been put to the preparation of the Alternative Service Book (ASB), the first complete prayer book for use in the Church of England since 1662 (published in 1980). Sykes commented in *Contemporary Doctrine Classics* (Church House Publishing, London, 2005), p.xxv, that ‘it is somewhat ironic to reflect that in the midst of the furore surrounding the publication of *The Myth of God Incarnate* liturgical scholars were newly installing “O gladsome light, O grace, of God the Father’s face”, a patristic hymn of high christological content, into the revised office of Evening Prayer. Controversies about radical proposals are not necessarily a reliable indicator of how theology is developing in any era.’

¹⁰¹ As just one example, see Maurice, F. D., *Thoughts on the Rule of Conscientious Subscription* (Oxford, 1845) and Temple, W., *Nature, Man and God* (Macmillan, London, 1934). Maurice was a Bishop, Temple was Archbishop.

questions of Religious Pluralism (1970s, 1980s and 1990s), G.W. Lampe, John V. Taylor, Norman Anderson and Michael Nazir-Ali all wrote from different theological perspectives on the subject.¹⁰² The work of these latter four and their opinions are found throughout the Reports and Debates of General Synod which I will be analysing in this thesis and each of them has quite a different perspective. I have chosen not to look in-depth at the work of any one of these theologians, because although they contribute to the Debate as a whole, not one of them would presume to speak *for* 'the Anglican Church'. They have no authoritative platform, they are simply educated bishops and laymen, writing theologically in response to practical issues, who also happen to be Anglican; and this is how the Church of England has produced its theology since Hooker and Cranmer in the sixteenth century. We may find, having finished analysing the Reports and Debates, that it is not possible to say what Anglican Theology *is*, only what some Anglican theologians have said: and the ecclesial breadth and depth of the Anglican Church means that there will always be polarity. One can expect to find the full breadth of theological perspective because this is the history of theology in the Church of England: a response to both 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' theology. The history of all theology is that it develops within a dialectical process but what is unusual in the Church of England is that there is this inherent methodological corrective which means that theologians must always listen to the opposite argument because this is the way the Commission (for each and every Report) has been selected.

¹⁰² See, for example, Lampe, G., *God as Spirit* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977), Taylor, J.V., *The Go-Between God* (SCM, London, 1972), Anderson, N., *The Mystery of the Incarnation* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1978), Nazir-Ali, M., 'That which is not to be found but which finds us: Discussion paper for the Lambeth Conference 1988', in *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* (ACC, London, 1986). Lampe was an ordained Professor of Theology at Cambridge, Taylor, a Bishop, Anderson a layman and Professor of Law at King's College, London and Nazir-Ali a Bishop.

1.1.7 Conclusion

Although many have argued that the Church of England does not have a theology of its own, I would like to argue that its theological method, which is clearly distinctive, has an important voice to add to the theological Debates of Religious Pluralism. I would wish to suggest that the theology of the Church of England can be called ‘Practical Theology’,¹⁰³ discovered as it is through its spirituality, liturgy, hymnody and works by educated laymen and clerics. To develop this point, it is to this discipline that I now turn.

1.2 Practical and Pastoral Theology

James Woodward and Stephen Pattison, in their *Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, define Practical Theology as ‘a place where religious belief, tradition and practice meets contemporary experiences, questions and actions and conducts dialogue that is mutually enriching, intellectually critical and practically transforming.’¹⁰⁴ This definition gives some idea of the multidisciplinary nature of Practical Theology, which is an important part of its identity. I have already noted that many scholars believe that Anglican Theology is characterised by provisionality and incompleteness, by its response to particular situations and its desire to chart a middle way wherever possible. In being broad enough to contain many voices, it has always been about theology in this place, but also theology in Dialogue, theology on the way. This is illustrated by the example of the 1984 Church of England Report on the 1979

¹⁰³ Although, Practical and Pastoral Theology was identified as a particular discipline in the mid-twentieth century, through the works of Hiltner in the USA (*Preface to Pastoral Theology*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1958), and Ballard in Britain (*The Foundations of Pastoral Studies and Practical Theology*, HOLI, Cardiff University, 1986). In this still-emerging field, there has never been a study of the influence of historical Anglican methodology in Pastoral and Practical theology.

¹⁰⁴ Woodward, J., and Pattison, S., (eds) *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2000), p.5.

WCC Guidelines on Dialogue, which was called *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue*:

Theological reflection ought not to be undertaken in the abstract. It must engage with the experience of those whose lives are daily caught up in inter-faith situations. The insights of Scripture and Tradition have to be related to experience, so that experience may speak to Scripture and Tradition. At the same time it is to be expected that Scripture and Tradition will sometimes confirm and sometimes judge what is perceived in experience. Exploration of the theological aspects of dialogue must not be left to those who live in multi-faith situations nor to the theologians. The reflection is the responsibility of the whole Christian community open to the guidance of the Spirit.¹⁰⁵

I have already included in this chapter two definitions of Practical Theology, one which highlights the interplay of a range of *methods* and one which emphasises the interplay of belief, tradition and practice with Dialogue. However, as the title of Woodward and Pattison's book suggests, Practical Theology is closely linked to and sometimes confused with Pastoral Theology and it is widely recognised that neither discipline is easy to define:

It is certainly possible to define pastoral theology and practical theology clearly. However, it is probably not very useful to do so. The trouble is that definitions differ. There is no one universally accepted definition of either term...Pastoral and practical theology is a diffuse and changing field that involves many diverse participants, methods and concerns.¹⁰⁶

With this caveat in mind, Practical Theology is a term which emerged in the German Protestant tradition as part of the academic theological curriculum in the late eighteenth century. It was the German Reformed theologian, Schleiermacher (1768–1834) who defined the modern understanding of Practical Theology, which he saw as a set of techniques for governing and perfecting the Church, the 'crown' of a

¹⁰⁵ *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* (Church House Publishing, London, 1984), p.1.

¹⁰⁶ Woodward, J., and Pattison, S., (eds) *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Blackwell, Oxford, 2000), p.4.

theological ‘tree’ whose roots were in philosophical exploration. Many people prefer the term Pastoral Theology to describe the theological activity that undergirds and accompanies pastoral care. Practical Theology has tended to be preferred as a term that includes Pastoral Theology within the mainstream Reformed tradition. Scotland has had departments of Practical Theology since the middle of the twentieth century. In England and Wales, Practical Theology was almost unknown and only came into the universities in the 1960s as ‘pastoral studies’. Since then, the term ‘pastoral’ has come to be used in secular personal care amongst a large number of professions and in English and Welsh theological education there are signs of the introduction of the term ‘Practical Theology’, which would bring it in line not only with Scottish usage but with the broader North American tradition as well.¹⁰⁷ It seems as though Woodward and Pattison are correct that these two terms are often confused or used interchangeably. My own preference is for Practical Theology, as I have already suggested and will continue to become clear. This is because the issues I am considering cover questions that are important for pastoral care *as well as* some important theological questions. Practical Theology has a history of growing out of Systematic Theology and thus I feel my own work, as a theological analysis of Religious Pluralism in the Church of England, is best placed within this context, rather than as Pastoral Theology.

Woodward and Pattison include the interplay of belief, tradition and practice with Dialogue in one of their definitions of Practical Theology and since the second half of the twentieth century there has been a conscious effort to engage with the social sciences, particularly sociology and psychology. This has sometimes led to a belief in

¹⁰⁷ Ballard, P. and Pritchard, J., *Practical Theology in Action* (SPCK, London, 1996/2006), p.26.

the possibility of a 'neutral standpoint'. But those who draw on the resources of their own ecclesiological history do not need to argue for a neutral standpoint and Percy is one of the first to identify his own 'inherent partiality'. He argues that ecclesiology itself is a kind of social theory and that:

a sociologically informed theology (which is, per se, an ecclesiology) must pay attention to the grounded reality of the congregation and the cultures that congregations inhabit.¹⁰⁸

In an article entitled 'Ecclesiology and Practical Theology', Nicholas Bradbury looks to 'a number of key ecclesiological issues' which he goes on to list as 'lay ministry, the corporateness of congregations and the impact of the human sciences.'¹⁰⁹ He defines ecclesiology as 'the branch of theology that looks at the Churches' self-understanding' but then, despite being a priest in the Church of England, does not make any use of the tradition of his own Church. I do not agree with Percy that a sociologically informed theology is per se an ecclesiology. My feeling is that Practical Theologians like Percy and Bradbury have tended to look at the Church through the lens of sociology, thus seeing ecclesiology in terms of the organisation of the Church, or the Church as an Organisation. I argue that if we understand the Church of England from its inception as establishing a methodology of Practical Theology, then Practical Theologians in the Church of England should be drawing more deeply on their own rich history of tradition than is currently the case. By this I mean looking back to the sixteenth century (and other key periods in the Church of England's history) and using theologians from the Anglican tradition such as Hooker, Cranmer and Jewel, to help inform and understand some of the contemporary debates. My suggestion is that Anglican ecclesiology, understood through its history and traditions, can offer a

¹⁰⁸ Percy, M., *Engaging with Contemporary Culture* (Ashgate, Hants, 2005), p.8.

¹⁰⁹ Bradbury, N., 'Ecclesiology and Practical Theology' in Woodward, J., and Pattison, S., (eds) *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Blackwell, Oxford, 2000), pp.173–181.

distinctive framework of methodology to Practical Theologians, thus ‘ecclesiology’ in this thesis refers to the history and traditions of the Church of England and the way in which these can (and must) inform the present. If Browning’s contention that ‘all theological thinking is essentially practical’¹¹⁰ and Pritchard and Ballard’s suggestion that Practical Theology requires a major reorientation in theology so that theology is ‘essentially a practical enterprise’, then my own contribution is to ask (with Percy and others) that particularity not be forgotten and to put forward the belief that the history and tradition of the Church of England offers a vital framework for the conversation between so many Dialogue partners. David Hazle touches on this when he too argues that all theology is essentially practical so that ‘all kinds of theology are ultimately interrelated within the sphere of the Church as the community of practice.’¹¹¹ The case studies I use in this thesis will act as examples of this, as I turn to the Debates and Reports of my own Church as the ‘community of practice’ on issues of Religious Pluralism. However, what I believe is missing from Hazle is that further element of the Church as a community which has been shaped and moulded by the living interaction with its own history and tradition. I do not consider it my remit in this thesis to investigate the reasons why Practical Theology has not engaged more deeply with ecclesiology as history and tradition but if I were to point to direction for further research I would suggest looking to three areas: to the mid-1960s and the explosion of interest in using the social sciences in Practical Theology and the dangers of these being used to the detriment of theology,¹¹² to the sheer range and diversity of the

¹¹⁰ Browning, D., in Atkinson, D., and Field, D., (eds) *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (Inter Varsity Press, Leicester, 1995), p.42.

¹¹¹ Hazle, D., ‘Practical Theology Today and the Implications for Mission’ in *International Review of Mission*, XCII (366), July, pp.345–66, Quoted in Percy, M., *Engaging with Contemporary Culture* (Ashgate, Hants, 2005), p.12.

¹¹² See Ballard, P., and Pritchard, J., *Practical Theology in Action* (SPCK, London, 1996/2006), pp.63–4. Milbank, too, offers an informed critique of this in Milbank, J., *Theology and Social Theory* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1990/2006), specifically Chapter 5, ‘Policing the Sublime: a Critique of the Sociology of Religion’, pp.101–146.

subject and to the fact that its roots are within the Protestant and Reformed Churches rather than the Catholic Church.

1.2.1 Theory and Practice in Practical Theology

One area which needs further investigation in relation to the history and traditions of the Church of England is the relationship between the tradition and practice of the Church: or, as I have already raised, the relationship between Hooker's Scripture, Reason and Tradition on the one hand and the category of *experience* which Practical Theology brings to the conversation. Percy notes the wedge that has been driven between 'pure' and 'applied' theology as a result of the clericalisation and professionalism of theology which removes it from the realm of the ecclesial, or what Farley has called 'theology as habitus' (a way of life that includes prayer, worship and discipleship).¹¹³ My use of Sykes and Avis would seem to point to the possibility of Anglican Theology being 'theology as habitus'. However, in order to address the dangers of Percy's 'false wedge' specifically within Anglicanism, I need to now consider the relationship between Scripture, Reason and Tradition on the one hand and experience on the other.

Practical Theology has always been concerned with the relationship between theory and practice and different theologians have offered different models for this. Ballard and Pritchard suggest four, from Schleiermacher, Browning, the Liberation Theologians and Nouwen.¹¹⁴ The first, the applied theory model (Schleiermacher),

¹¹³ The habitus model is set out in Farley, E., *Theologia* (Fortress, Philadelphia, 1983).

¹¹⁴ Schleiermacher, F., *Brief Outline on the Study of Theology* (John Knox, Westminster, 1966); Browning, D., *The Moral Context of Pastoral Care* (John Knox, Westminster, 1976); Browning, D., (ed) *Practical Theology – The Emerging Field in Theology* (Harper and Row, London, 1983); On Liberation Theology as Practical Theology see Bevans, S. B., *Models of Contextual Theology* (Orbis, N.Y., 1992); Nouwen, H., *Creative Ministry* (Doubleday, New York, 1971).

argues that once you have established the point of authority and truth, you can apply the results to any pastoral situation. In particular, the results of social sciences. The second model is typified by Browning and is the model of critical correlation or hermeneutics. It argues that Christian living comes out of a Dialogue between tradition and contemporary reality and stresses the belief that ‘all truth is God’s truth’. Browning’s work has emphasised the importance of ethics as part of Practical Theology. The third model came out of the work of Liberation Theologians and I have also already made some links between Anglican Theology and Liberation Theology. This is the praxis model and argues that practice arises from committed action where faith must be understood as a transformative activity. Finally, the fourth model is the ‘habitus/virtue model’ which argues that practice is about the process of growth into wisdom. This was first suggested by Farley and has been developed since Alisdair MacIntyre’s 1985 book on virtue ethics, *After Virtue – A Study in Moral Theory*.¹¹⁵ Ballard and Pritchard make the point that these four models should be regarded as strands which are often woven together and affect each other. But even with this complexity in mind, is it possible to identify what I have called ‘Anglican Practical Theology’ within one of them? Such a question cannot be addressed by a single PhD thesis and once again, I can only highlight certain sources and point towards areas for further study.

Practical Theology as applied theory is the traditional model which began with Schleiermacher and is still the basis for much twentieth-century German Practical Theology, exemplified in some works by Bonhoeffer, Rahner, Thurneysen and

¹¹⁵ MacIntyre, A., *After Virtue – A Study in Moral Theory* (Duckworth, London, 1985).

Heitink.¹¹⁶ The model takes authority seriously, be it scripture or the teaching authority of the Church. But it has been criticised for having a unidirectional process from theory to practice which gives precedence to theory, making practice derivative. As we shall see, there were many in Synod who called for this kind of teaching authority to establish a theory first but there is no doubt that it was the practical issues which came first and for this reason (and the fact that the Church of England does not have any clear-cut 'teaching authority') the method of applied theory does not seem to fit the Anglican model.

The method of critical correlation put forward by (among others) Browning and Tracy may be a place where Anglican Practical Theology can find a home. The three emphases are, Dialogue with a tradition (i.e. a theological perspective on the one hand and the issue under consideration on the other), ethics as both the parameters and the methodology and, lastly, hermeneutics as the heuristic tool to understanding both the practical situation and the scriptures pertaining to it. All of these categories can be traced through the responses to the Reports and Debates, but what is missing is any element of theology through liturgy, which has already been identified as an essential hallmark of Anglican Theology.

Praxis models for Practical Theology attempt to overcome the rationalistic distinction between theory and practice by using the present, concrete situation as the starting point. It is epitomised by Liberation Theology and relies to some extent on a Marxist analysis of history and social structures. As I turn to four very concrete interfaith

¹¹⁶ Bonhoeffer, D., *Spiritual Care* (Fortress, Philadelphia, 1985); Rahner, K., *Theology of Pastoral Action* (Burns and Oates, Edinburgh, 1968); Thurneysen, E., *A Theology of Pastoral Care* (John Knox, Westminster, 1962); Heitink, G., *Practical Theology – History, Theory, Action, Dynamics* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1999).

situations that have arisen in the Church of England, it seems inescapable that Anglican Practical Theology begins with this praxis model and certainly, I have already made reference to the similarities with Liberation Theology. However the praxis model has been criticised for its tendency to activism and lack of reflection and personal spirituality. In the Synod Debates, members were very wary of any approach (for example, ‘Dialogue’) which emphasised action over theology. Perhaps Anglican Practical Theology, with its own starting point of ecclesial and liturgical issues, has a natural corrective to the praxis model; after all, there is no reason why liturgy cannot be understood as praxis.

The last model is the habitus model that Percy refers to in his 2005 book. It suggests that theology is not about praxis, skills or a systematic intellectual pursuit but about a training of the mind and heart. Ballard and Pritchard believe it may be ‘foundational to theology’ and refer particularly to the Eastern Orthodox tradition where ‘orthodoxy does not simply mean “right belief” but “right glory”: that is, knowing, speaking and worshipping God aright in sacrament and in life.’¹¹⁷ I have already mentioned the similarities between the Orthodox and Anglican traditions in their use of liturgy as a starting point and *Lex Orandi, Lex Credendi* seems to fit into this model of Practical Theology as habitus. The danger might be that theology is sidelined in favour of praxis, but the Debates in General Synod seem to suggest that while the starting point was often liturgy (for example, multi-faith worship), the demand for sound theological principles was always there.

¹¹⁷ Ballard, P., and Pritchard, J., *Practical Theology in Action* (SPCK, London, 1996/2006), p.74.

1.2.2 Summary

This excursus on Practical Theology has been an important part of equipping myself for the analytical task ahead. In the first section of this chapter I have suggested that Anglican Theology is Practical Theology and that, understood historically, it has much to commend it as a fresh way of looking both at the theological methodology of the Church of England and also at the discipline of Practical Theology, which has so far traced its roots only to eighteenth-century Protestantism. However, before turning to the Reports and Debates it was important to investigate this claim a little further by developing the relationship between Scripture, Reason, Tradition and *experience*, testing the limits of what I can uncover as part of this thesis. I have noted elements of all Anglican Practical Theology in all four models but suggested that the ‘habitus’ model is where Anglican Theology most comfortably finds its home. It is now time to turn to the historic process of Debate and decision-making in the Church of England, with a look at the General Synod.

1.3 A Note About the General Synod of the Church of England

Having looked at the history and tradition of the way in which the Church of England does theology and having suggested that this distinctive approach might be called Anglican Practical Theology, I now turn to the two most obviously distinctive features of the Church of England – the fact of its Establishment and the influence this has had on the way it is governed. Next, I will attempt an explanation of the General Synod of the Church of England. This requires both a brief history of decision-making in the Church of England and further detail about the way in which Debates are conducted now, and how Reports are commissioned.

1.3.1 Convocation: an historical perspective

Before 1534, the Pope had authority over the Church in England through his appointed Cardinals, one of whom was Cardinal Archbishop of Canterbury. However, in England, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York had both the right to sit in Parliament and the right to summon clergy to provincial synods, or 'Convocations'. From 1296, these Convocations were divided into 'Houses'; first four Houses,¹¹⁸ but after the dissolution of the Monasteries in Henry VIII's reign,¹¹⁹ it was reduced to the Upper and Lower House.¹²⁰ In 1533, Henry VIII passed the Act of Submission, which meant that Convocation lost its independence and had its powers curtailed. From this point on the two Convocations were summoned by the Archbishops on the instruction of the Monarch whenever Parliament was summoned. Once King Henry VIII passed the Act of Supremacy in 1534, the locus of authority in the Church lay with the monarch, who was now 'the only supreme head on earth of the Church in England'. Convocation was summoned by both Henry VIII and Elizabeth I to complete the work of the Reformation in England. So, for example, the Convocation of 1661 undertook the business of the revision of the Book of Common Prayer.

After 1689, there were great disputes between the Upper and Lower Houses which led to Convocations' prorogation by the Archbishop of Canterbury.¹²¹ Between 1689 and

¹¹⁸ Bishops, Monastic representatives, Dignitaries and Proctors of the Clergy.

¹¹⁹ 1536–1541.

¹²⁰ Upper House was for Archbishops and Bishops, Lower House was for Deans of Cathedrals and Archdeacons.

¹²¹ In 1689, in view of the opposition of the clergy to the Toleration Act of William and Mary, no summons was issued to Convocation. The Commons, however, protested against the innovation, and their petition had its effect; at the same time Archbishop Tillotson, and to some extent his successor Tenison, met the difficulties of the situation by refusing to allow any deliberations. Convocation was summoned, met and was prorogued. Parties were formed and claims were made, insisting upon the independence of the Lower House on the analogy of the House of Commons. Atterbury led the malcontents; Wake, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, Kennet, Hoadley and Gibson led the defence. The question was really a political one. Toryism dominated the Lower House; Liberalism, alike in politics and theology, pervaded the Upper House. Permission to deliberate led to trouble in

1717 the Lower House refused to acknowledge the Archbishop's right of prorogation which led, in 1717, to the Crown's final prorogation of the Convocations. Nearly one hundred and fifty years later, in 1852, the Bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce, procured a license from the Crown for the Convocation of Canterbury to meet once more and in 1861 York followed suite. These Convocations were representative bodies who could approach Parliament with requests but had little power to make their own policies effective.

1.3.2 Convocation to General Synod: the twentieth century

Colin Buchanan, in his history of General Synod in the twentieth century, writes that 'until 1920 the Church of England was in effect a semi-detached department of state and its sole governing body was Parliament'.¹²² State law and Church law were one and the same thing and both the Doctrine and organisation of the Church of England were therefore also governed by Parliament. However, by the late nineteenth century, this meant that Church of England business started to take up a lot of time in Parliament and as there is no religious test for membership of Parliament, many members began to resent this.¹²³ After the 'Life and Liberty' movement of 1917,¹²⁴ Parliament gave the Convocations permission to set up a Church Assembly in 1919. This they did, reforming the membership of the Convocations and adding a House of Laity. Within a year, Parliament passed the enabling act, the 'Church of England

1701, and prorogation followed. The Bangorian Controversy arising out of Hoadly's sermon led to similar results in 1717. The opposition of the Lower House was worn out by repeated prorogations immediately following the opening session, and with the exception of the discussions allowed in 1741 and 1742, Convocation ceased to be a deliberative body until 1854. See Rupp, E. G., *Religion in England 1688–1791* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986), pp.237ff.

¹²² Buchanan, C., *Taking the Long View: Three and a half decades of General Synod* (Church House Publishing, London, 2006) p.7. Colin Buchanan was suffragan Bishop of Aston from 1985 until 1989.

¹²³ Buchanan, C., *Taking the Long View: Three and a half decades of General Synod* (Church House Publishing, London, 2006), p.218.

¹²⁴ Led by William Temple, 'The Life and Liberty Movement aims at securing for the Church without delay Liberty in the sense of full power to control its own life and organisation.' Iremonger, F. A. *William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1948), p.224.

Assembly (Powers) Act' and the new Assembly had the power to devise its own legislation. Parliament would still need to pass the Measures, but they could not change them, only accept or reject them in their entirety. The Debates I shall be considering from 1966 come therefore not from the 'General Synod' but from the 'Church Assembly'.

By 1969 the 'Synodical Government Measure' was passed by Parliament, which brought the General Synod of the Church of England into existence.¹²⁵ Pressure for this had come from within the the House of Laity which had taken note of the privilege of the Convocations in relation to Doctrine and sole power in passing of Canons. From 1970, the Convocations and the House of Laity met as one single body, three times a year¹²⁶ (alternately in Canterbury and York), now with three Houses: Bishops, Clergy and Laity.

When the General Synod was formed in 1970 there were 43 Bishops, 250 Clergy and 250 Laity. By 2005 there were 54 Bishops,¹²⁷ 200 Clergy¹²⁸ and 258 Laity.¹²⁹ Since 1975, it has always met twice a year but can meet three times a year (Group of Sessions November, February and July). Each Session is officially opened by the

¹²⁵ Hastings, A., *A History of English Christianity 1920–2000* (SCM, London, 1986/2001), pp.546–7.

¹²⁶ Three times a year for the first five years, in order to establish working patterns. Thereafter, twice a year with the option of a third time 'if necessary' (February, July and November).

¹²⁷ 44 Diocesan Bishops, 7 'suffragan' Bishops, the Bishop to the Forces and the two Archbishops. These make up 'The Convocations' Upper House.'

¹²⁸ These make up 'The Convocations' Lower House.' 128 elected from the Province of Canterbury, 54 from the Province of York. One each from the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and London. One elected jointly by the Universities of Durham and Newcastle. Two from other Universities (one from each Province). Six Deans of Cathedrals, plus either the Dean of Jersey or the Dean of Guernsey. The three Chaplains of the Armed Services, plus the Chaplain-General of Prisons. Two members of religious communities.

¹²⁹ House of Laity has 250 elected members, plus the Dean of the Arches, the Vicar-General of the Provinces of Canterbury and York, the three Church Estate Commissioners, the Chairman of the Central Board of Finance, the Chairman of the Pensions Board and the members of the Archbishops' Council who are communicants of the Church of England. Source: *The Church of England Year Book 2009*, p.5.

monarch and meetings are presided over by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York as joint presidents. The functions of the General Synod are fivefold: to pass legislation,¹³⁰ to approve liturgy and make other rules and regulations through Acts of Synod,¹³¹ to regulate relations with other churches, to consider and express their opinion on any other matters of religious or public interest and to approve or reject the annual budget of the Church.

The House of Bishops is made up of all the Bishops of the Church of England and meets outside Synod, three times a year. The House of Clergy and the House of Laity are re-elected every five years. Measures or Canons must be passed by a majority of the members of each House. Most other business can be passed by a majority of the members of the Synod overall. All members are expected to vote according to their conscience, nobody can instruct them how to vote.¹³² Major speeches from the platform are made to introduce resolutions and the movers of them have the chance to reply at the end of the Debate. Amendments from the floor can usually be resisted by the main speaker, but the main speaker will have to speak against tabled amendments. Unlike Parliament, there are no party whips in Synod and no predetermined votes. With various forms of business a two-thirds majority in favour is needed in each of the three Houses, and in almost any business twenty-five members on their feet can ask for a count by Houses and then a motion lost in any one House is lost in the whole

¹³⁰ Legislation can come either as the passing of Measures (dealing with the government of the Church and its institutions) or of the passing of Canons (determining doctrine and the form of worship). See the sixth edition of the *Canons of the Church of England* (Church House Publishing, London, 2008), p.xvii. For example, it was through an amendment to the Canons that women were admitted to the priesthood, Canon C4B. The making of the Canon was authorised by the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993.

¹³¹ For example, the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993, which makes provision for those parishes which would not accept women priests to be overseen by alternative bishops. (See the official Church of England website www.cofe.anglican.org/about/churchlawlegis/faq/ep_isactofsynod (consulted July 2010).)

¹³² Buchanan, C., *Taking the Long View: Three and a half decades of General Synod* (Church House Publishing, London, 2006), p.6.

Synod. If business is referred to the dioceses by Synod, then when it returns to Synod, members will have the voting figures from the Diocesan Synod in front of them when they vote. Changes to Church Doctrine, rites and ceremonies, or the administration of the sacraments can only be made in the form agreed by the House of Bishops. Changes in liturgy (and for example, the services of Baptism or Holy Communion) cannot be approved unless they have also been approved by a majority of the Diocesan Synods.¹³³

The Powers Act of 1919 required that, after being passed by the Assembly, any Measure had to be examined by a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament and then approved by a vote of each House before being submitted to the Monarch for Royal Assent. If MPs or members of the House of Lords are not content with a Measure then they can vote to reject it, but they cannot amend it. Once a Measure has been ‘deemed expedient’ (agreed) by both Houses of Parliament, and received Royal Assent, it is printed with the Acts of Parliament for the year in question.¹³⁴

The Church in England has always met together in Convocation, but since the 1533 Act of Submission, the clergy were drawn more closely into line with Parliament and Convocation came under the authority of the Monarch and not the Pope. The process of discovering self-government has been a gradual one, given particular impetus by Samuel Wilberforce in 1852 and William Temple in 1917. The Monarch remains the ‘Supreme Governor’ of the Church of England and while this is the case, there will always be a link between Parliament and the business of the General Synod of the

¹³³ See also the Church of England official website www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod (consulted July 2010) and Hill, M., *Ecclesiastical Law* Vol 3 (2007), pp.33ff.

¹³⁴ Hastings, A., *A History of English Christianity 1920–2000* (SCM, London, 1986/2001), pp.606–7, 665.

Church of England. However, as well as showing how the General Synod came into being and the necessary links there still are with both Houses of Parliament, I have also shown some of the ways in which it differs from the system of government in England.¹³⁵ Today, worship is an integral part of the Sessions of General Synod and each day is punctuated by the rhythm of daily prayer. Perhaps the most important lesson it has taken from its political roots is that of elected representation and of the tricameral system of Houses. As we look later at the Reports and Debates of the General Synod concerning matters of Religious Pluralism, it will be interesting to see the checks and balances which this system contributes to the process of developing theology.

Where I have so far argued that what is distinctive in Anglican Theology is both the Church of England's history of walking the '*Via Media*' between Catholic and Reformed traditions and the use of its Prayer Book and Formularies instead of a Systematic Theology, it now seems clear that the nature of the Church of England as an Established Church and the way in which its Synod is modelled on Parliament also have a distinctive contribution to Anglican Theology as Practical Theology. As we shall see, there are certain issues of Religious Pluralism (such as multi-faith worship and mixed-faith marriages) which arise precisely because of the Establishment of the Church of England and those questions of national unity with which Elizabeth I was so concerned. What I also hope to demonstrate is that the way Synod works, with speeches 'for' and 'against', with permission for amendments to be tabled and Private Members Motions to be brought, with voting by Houses, also contributes to a system

¹³⁵ Davie, G., *Believing without Belonging: Religion in Britain since 1945* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1994/1995), pp.169–182.

in which experience is both valued and encouraged and therefore helps to shape a Practical Theology that is distinctively Anglican.

1.4 Alan Race and the Three-Fold Paradigm

In the introduction, I referred to the work of Alan Race as that which began the process of systematisation of the Theology of Religions.¹³⁶ In 1983, working as a parish priest in the multicultural city of Leicester, he identified:

a need to co-ordinate the diverse opinion now emerging under the umbrella heading of a Christian theology of religions... In this study I adopt the headings Exclusivism, Inclusivism and Pluralism as a broad typological framework within which most of the current Christian theologies of religions can be placed.¹³⁷

Although there have since been several criticisms of Races' typology (see section 1.4.5) the broad categorisation still makes sense, particularly when applied to the historical context of the Reports and Debates of General Synod at this time. In section 1.4.5 I discuss the recent evaluations of the typology and defend my reasons for using it as the framework for analysis in the chapters that follow.

1.4.1 The Situation in the Early 1980s

In his book *Christians and Religious Pluralism*, Race intended to 'develop a typology as a means of bringing some order to the range of positions being canvassed in the Christian response to other world religions.'¹³⁸ At the time he was writing, in the early 1980s, there was an explosion of literature on this subject and an increasing appetite

¹³⁶ The Revd Canon Dr Alan Race has been a priest in the Diocese of Leicester since 1994. He was the Director of Studies on the Southwark Ordination Course from 1984–1994 and has been the Dean of Postgraduate Studies at St Philip's Centre in Leicester since 2004.

¹³⁷ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), pp.6–7. In these pages he also acknowledged previous 'attempts' at classification in the work of Thomas, O.C., *Attitudes Toward Other Religions* (SCM, London, 1969), Hallencreutz, C. F., *New Approaches to Men of Other Faiths* (WCC, Geneva, 1970), and Sharpe, E. J., *Faith Meets Faith* (SCM, London, 1977).

¹³⁸ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.viii.

for it. In the Church of England, there had been some important discussions about multi-faith worship (in the context of the Commonwealth Service) and also about redundant church buildings. In the WCC there were documents being produced about 'Dialogue' which would shortly find their way to the General Synod for discussion and debate. But in his 1983 book, Race was the first to formalise the Debate.

His first point was that living in a 'religiously plural world is not new';¹³⁹ and he made the now familiar point that Christianity itself was born into Dialogue with both Judaism and Hellenic philosophy, and that there were many occasions in its history that Christianity had to learn to live with and talk to 'other religions' – for example, during the reign of Constantine, during the Crusades and in the Middle Ages with the rise of Aristotelian philosophy in Europe to which Aquinas addressed himself. From the Reformation onwards, as Europeans travelled to the Americas, to Africa, to China and the Far East, the missionary work of the Religious Orders meant that once again, Christianity was in conversation with other religions and cultures.¹⁴⁰ Indeed, in England, I have already suggested that the way in which the Church was expressed locally has never been monotone, and certainly since the Reformation Christianity in this country has been a diverse and lively collection of local ecclesiologies. But Race explains that what *has* changed for Christianity in the West, what has brought about this sudden interest in questions of Religious Pluralism, is the changing situation in countries like England, where not only for the missionaries but for everyday

¹³⁹ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.10.

¹⁴⁰ A good example of this is the Jesuit missions to China in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. These were initiated by St Francis Xavier in 1552 (although he died one year later). In 1582, the Jesuits initiated missionary work in China once again (led by several Italian academics, including Matteo Ricci, S.J.), introducing Western science, mathematics and astronomy to the Imperial Court and involving themselves in cultural and philosophical dialogue with Chinese scholars, particularly on the subject of Confucianism. Woods, T., *How the Catholic Church built Western Civilisation* (Regenery, Washington DC, 2005), pp.18–23.

Christians there is 'personal contact between men and women from different cultures and faiths, at work or in a neighbourhood.'¹⁴¹

This personal contact has come about as a result of immigration (particularly since the end of the Second World War) because of changing patterns of mobility, which mean that more people are living in cities and because of the 'technological revolutions' in both travel and communication, which has led to 'the notion that the world is becoming a global village.' While this was indeed true for the young and for those who lived in cities like Leicester, Leeds-Bradford and London, what Race did not take into account (and what was put with great strength of feeling at the General Synod Debates), was that for large parts of the 'Church', amongst the middle-aged and older population of Christians and for those living in smaller cities and rural areas (which was still the majority), this experience of 'personal contact' was simply not there.

Race also made the point in his book that there was a paradigm-shift taking place at an academic level after 'a wealth of knowledge has accumulated over the last two hundred years about the non-Christian faiths.'¹⁴² This knowledge has come from the 'history of religions school', from missionaries and from the rise of the philosophical sciences and their interest in the East. The literature which was being produced at this time was trying to come to terms with questions of the possibility and (if possible), the nature of multiple and mutually contradictory truths:

The Christian theology of religions is the attempt to account theologically for the diversity of the world's religious quest and commitment... it is the endeavour to adumbrate some doctrine of other religions, to evaluate the relationship between the Christian faith and the faith of the other religions. As Wilfred Cantwell

¹⁴¹ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983 1993), p.1.

¹⁴² Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.2.

Smith has said: 'we explain the fact of the Milky Way by the doctrine of creation but how do you explain the fact that the Bhagavad Gita is there?' This is the urgent task before the church as the world advances towards some sort of unity implied in the term 'global village'.¹⁴³

Race wanted both to develop a typology for theological responses to other faiths and to 'argue a case for a more pluralist approach as the way forward.'¹⁴⁴ He believed that the Christian response to other faiths would come to represent a seismic shift in theological understanding 'and this is likely to pose an even greater challenge to Christianity than the clash with agnostic science.'¹⁴⁵ He argued that this was the case, because in the encounter with other faiths, it was impossible for the Christian not to be changed. And this change must mean a change in Doctrine and in particular, a change in our understanding of Jesus Christ as the unique Revelation of God (the Incarnation). In this he was reflecting one of the most significant contemporary debates in the theological world, following the 1977 publication of *The Myth of God Incarnate*.¹⁴⁶ As I shall demonstrate in the analysis of the Synod Reports and Debates, this was a discussion which had also had a significant impact on members of Synod.

As well as his belief that the proximity of other religions would cause Christians to rethink their Doctrines, Race was convinced that the Christian approach to Mission would also have to change. Even in this brief summary of Race so far, it is clear how much of the early Theology of Religions was indebted to the work of Christian missionaries; and the question of how Mission should change with the increased numbers of other religions in the parishes of England was one which became central

¹⁴³ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), pp.2–3. He quotes Smith, W.C., *The Faith of Other Men* (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1972), p.133.

¹⁴⁴ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.viii.

¹⁴⁵ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), pp.3–4.

¹⁴⁶ Hick, J., (ed.) *The Myth of God Incarnate* (SPCK, London, 1977).

in Synod. I mentioned in the introduction that the Theology of Religions was concerned, amongst other things, with Christology, the Doctrine of God, Mission and Salvation, and the nature of the Church. As we now turn to the theology of the three-fold paradigm I shall consider how Race believed each ‘type’ would respond to these four theological issues.

1.4.2 The Typology: exclusivism

Race explains in his introduction that he plans to develop a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism by using key theologians to illustrate a ‘typology’. However, for ‘exclusivism’ he opens with two biblical texts which we will see often mentioned in the Reports and Debates of General Synod. Firstly, there is Peter, speaking in Acts 4.12 ‘And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.’ Then, the words attributed to Jesus in the Gospel of John 14.6, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me.’

The exclusivist position is concerned with two fundamental doctrinal tenets which are developed from these (and other) biblical passages. The first is that Jesus Christ is God’s son, who has been sent to bring Salvation to the world and that this Salvation is both mercy and judgement for all human beings who are deeply estranged from God. According to this model, Salvation therefore comes from one source only, and that is faith in Christ – *solus Christus*. It should be noted that this is an affirmation which many ‘inclusivists’ share. The second doctrinal tenet is that this Salvation, won by Christ, is only available through explicit stated faith in Christ which comes from hearing the gospel preached – *fides ex auditu* –: from repentance, baptism and a new

life in Christ. This is where exclusivists and inclusivists differ (and where inclusivists and pluralists agree). For the exclusivist, doctrinally, *solus Christus* and *fides ex auditu* are more important than anything else, because anything less compromises both the Incarnation and the Atonement. The logic of this type of theology requires that Salvation is a free gift, unmerited by human beings. This means that the exclusivist's response to Salvation in Christ alone is awe and gratitude for what is seen as God's universal, unmerited gift. So, rather than the shock at the scandal of particularity (which is often the pluralist's position, as we shall see), the exclusivist can only humbly proclaim this truth rather than question it. For this reason, Mission and Evangelisation will always be more appropriate than Dialogue. No exclusivist would wish non-Christians ill but would instead emphasise the urgency and necessity of worldwide evangelisation.

Race's initial summary of the exclusivist position is that 'exclusivism counts the revelation in Jesus Christ as the sole criterion by which all religions, including Christianity, can be understood and evaluated.'¹⁴⁷ He considers each of the three types in his paradigm through key theologians and for exclusivism he turns to the work of Karl Barth, Emil Brunner and Hendrik Kraemer. I have already suggested four key theological areas raised by the Theology of Religions and we will see how these issues are central to the Reports and Debates of General Synod. For this reason, I shall be using Race to delineate the differences between each of his three suggested 'types' on each of these four theological issues (Christology, the Doctrine of God, Mission and Salvation, and the nature of the Church).

¹⁴⁷ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.11.

As I have already shown, the exclusivist position is largely characterised by its theology of Jesus Christ as God's full and final Revelation, sent to bring Salvation to the world. Salvation is only possible through explicit stated faith in Christ. God has spoken to the world through His Word, Jesus Christ. Christ has already won Salvation for humanity but humans must respond to this gift. Since the Word became flesh (the Incarnation), Christians have to interpret God's Revelation in nature and history in the light of the Revelation in Christ. The Doctrine of the Incarnation is therefore central to exclusivism. The Revelation of God in Jesus Christ reveals all humanity to be in need of this Salvation, whether or not they acknowledge this fact. With Jesus Christ as God's Revelation, all religious practice is labelled 'unbelief' and all religion is in error and sinful blindness, Christianity included. Christ is the 'Truth' which all religions seek. There is nothing in history that does not point towards him. Christ is the unique and absolute Revelation of God. Jesus Christ is therefore both the 'fulfiller' of all religion but also the 'judgement' on it.

But what kind of God do exclusivists believe in, according to Race? If we extrapolate from the Christology we have just outlined, it seems that the exclusivist Doctrine of God is of an all-loving God who has, of His grace, found a way in which humans can bridge the gulf created by sin. God has revealed himself to us; a revelation understood as the self-offering of God on mankind's behalf to provide the means of reconciliation with them. It is an act of grace accomplished for mankind's Salvation. Humans are unable to help themselves, they cannot reach God apart from God's gracious activity. This is a profoundly transcendent God, whom mankind cannot reach outside the miracle of God's grace. Religion is the attempt by mankind to justify themselves apart from Revelation and is therefore an activity of unbelief. Exclusivists are determined to

defend the absolute free sovereignty of God to act. Their starting point is not a theology of other religions but God; and in this they echo many of those in the Reports and Debates for whom the starting point was not other faiths but God's Revelation in Christ.

It follows from this not only that Christianity alone has the received authority to be a missionary religion, but also that there is an inherent duty, an urgency even, to Mission. The Chicago Conference on World Mission in 1960 stated:

In the years since the war, more than one billion souls have passed into eternity and more than half of these went to the torment of hell fire without even hearing of Jesus Christ, who He was or why He died on the Cross of Calvary.¹⁴⁸

D'Costa has argued that it is important not to caricature exclusivism's attitude to Mission because, as he says 'there is no theologian I know who actually argues that God damns people against their will or that God damns people other than because God is just.'¹⁴⁹ For the exclusivist, God's justice should demand that everyone is consigned to Hell, because of the sinful nature of mankind. All are justly damned. God's mercy is seen in sending Christ to earth – this is the way in which Christ is both mercy and damnation for sinful humankind. Humans should stand in awe and love at God's merciful, free and undeserved gift of his Son. They must also recognise the imperative of bringing all non-Christians to explicit faith (*fides ex auditu*) in Christ, through proclamation and conversion. This is not to say that the Church cannot learn from Dialogue with people who do not acknowledge Christ as the unique Revelation

¹⁴⁸ Percy, J., (ed.) *Facing the Unfinished Task* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1961), p.9. Quoted in D'Costa, G., 'Theology of Religions', (ed.) Ford, D., *The Modern Theologians* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1997/2007), p. 630.

¹⁴⁹ D'Costa, G., *Christianity and the World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2009), p.27.

of God: Race quotes Lesslie Newbigin's use of the story of Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10 as the kind of mutual learning process he envisages:

In this story the Church learns further about Jesus when a stranger to the gospel is converted and in the conversion brings a new understanding from his own background and cultural heritage to bear on his understanding of the person of Jesus.¹⁵⁰

The purpose of Dialogue is to bring the non-Christian to faith. Once they are part of the Church they may augment the life of the Church with their unique perspective. It is not that there is nothing good in other religions (and this is an area of overlap with inclusivists) but that ultimately the light of Revelation in Christ must highlight the sinfulness of all human beings. So, Barth wrote:

First, there is the universal revelation of God to mankind through the moral law within and the created world without, and this corresponds to God's 'yes' to the world. Second, there is the perverted and distorted awareness of that revelation through sin and blindness...both of these aspects are revealed by the revelation in Jesus Christ. The breath of the Holy does indeed blow through the religions, so that God cannot be said to be absent from them, and it would be undialectical to dub them unbelief; but the new order which is established by Christ reveals also the distorted awareness that characterises their heart.¹⁵¹

Men and women from other religions may be good people and they may enrich our understanding of Christ, but ultimately the only way that a Christian can respond to God's grace is to tell other religions about Christ and encourage them to respond in repentance and faith. This too is a view found repeatedly in the Debates of the General Synod.

¹⁵⁰ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.26.

¹⁵¹ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.18.

There is an important link here between Mission and the nature of the Church. If Christians must recognise their own role in bringing non-Christians to *fides ex auditu*, then they must also recognise that this explicit faith is not just faith in Christ but faith in Christ's Church. As I have already stated, *fides ex auditu* means repentance, baptism and new life in Christ. But baptism is one of the essential sacraments of the Church and this new life of faith in Christ (which is the cause of Salvation) must be brought about (the means of Salvation) by the Church. There is a strong argument for discontinuity here – surrendering to Christ means making a break with one's past and Race quotes Kraemer as saying that 'the Church is in duty bound to require this break, because one must *openly* confess Him.'¹⁵² This is the explicit faith to which *fides ex auditu* refers. But what of the emphasis on a transcendent God, of the absolute free sovereignty of God to act? Does this not render all human effort (in Mission, in the Church as a means of Salvation) null and void? The exclusivist position outlined by Race is clear. It is not the Church as developed historical religion, with its own complex structures and organisation, which judges other faiths, but solely the gospel of Jesus Christ.¹⁵³ Therefore, as the locus of true religion (only as and when it lives by grace) the task of the Church is to proclaim to all people that Jesus Christ has died and been raised for them and that they already stand in the light of life.¹⁵⁴

Race summarised his chapter on exclusivism by saying that it is the most clear-cut, internally logical, consistent and coherent. He believed it to be the position closest to what has been held by orthodox Christianity for two thousand years but the question he put was whether it is an appropriate response to what he called 'the new knowledge

¹⁵² Kraemer, H., *Why Christianity, of all Religions?* (Lutterworth Press, London, 1962), p.79. Quoted in Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.24.

¹⁵³ This distinction between the Church on the one hand and Christ on the other has a Protestant heritage. Roman Catholic exclusivists would not recognise the division.

¹⁵⁴ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.15.

we now have about the world religions?’¹⁵⁵ He suggested that it is this ‘new knowledge’ coupled with the historical-critical exegesis of the Bible represents a fundamental challenge to exclusivism, because of the challenge it represents to the Doctrine of the Incarnation. But before developing this, he turned to the theological model he called ‘inclusivism’.

1.4.3 The Typology: inclusivism

Race began his summary of this position, not with biblical verses, but with a definition:

Inclusivism...is both an acceptance and a rejection of the other faiths. On the one hand it accepts the spiritual power and depth manifest in them, so that they can properly be called a locus of divine presence. On the other hand, it rejects them as not being sufficient for salvation apart from Christ, for Christ alone is saviour.¹⁵⁶

Inclusivist theologians (Farquhar, Rahner, Schlette and De Lubac), as this quotation suggests, cover a wide range of positions on the finer points of the Theology of Religion, but they tend to be united on the main point that whenever and wherever non-Christians respond to grace, this is the grace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This approach has often been called the theology of ‘fulfillment’, which develops from the ancient tradition of *preparatio evangelica*. So, Race looks to the traditions of the early Church Fathers. Justin Martyr (103–165 CE) whose work showed that there is no goodness or truth in the world independent of its origins in the being and action of God; believing, with the Stoics, that all humans participate in the universal cosmic Reason, the eternal divine Logos, which is the principle of coherent

¹⁵⁵ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.24.

¹⁵⁶ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.38.

rationality that permeates the whole universe and dwells intrinsically in the rationality of every human. This allowed Justin to say:

It is our belief that those men who strive to do the good which is enjoined on us have a share in God; according to our traditional belief they will by God's grace share his dwelling. And it is our conviction that this holds good in principle for all men...Christ is the divine Word in whom the whole human race share, and those who live according to the light of their knowledge are Christians, even if they are considered as being godless.¹⁵⁷

Another of the early Church Fathers, Clement of Alexandria (c.150-c. 215 CE) develops this idea and argues that Greek philosophy has acted as a schoolmaster (*paedagogos*) in the education of minds to dispose them towards Christ. The process of education was not therefore a function of natural thought alone, but was sanctioned as the work of the Holy Spirit of God. Race showed that Clement viewed the ancient thought and enlightenment of the Indian philosophers (the Brahmins and followers of Buddha) as more authentic guides and teachers than some of the Greek philosophers to orientate the nations to Christ.¹⁵⁸ In looking more closely at these early Church Fathers and at Luke, Race is demonstrating the historical pedigree of the twin concepts of partial revelation granted to other faiths and the presence of the Spirit of God to teach or prepare other faiths to receive the gospel. However, there is a difference within inclusivism between those who think that this grace can be salvific (like Rahner) and those who believe it prepares non-Christians for Salvation (Justin and Clement).

¹⁵⁷ Justin Martyr, *I Apology* 46, 1–4.

¹⁵⁸ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.43. Race refers his readers to Clement's *Stromata* 5, 8.3 and 6.8 in this passage, but does not give references for his statements about the 'Indian Philosophers'.

Race identifies the immediate difference between inclusivism and exclusivism as that of needing to engage with other cultures, rather than simply confronting them with the Christian message; although he has already highlighted in his previous chapter that exclusivists, too, are interested in engaging with other cultures (citing Newbigin, for example). And, as we shall see in the Reports and Debates, the desire to engage with other cultures is not restricted to inclusivists and pluralists. The real difference, I would argue, is the question of whether non-Christian religions can be said to have salvific structures and whether, finally, a person can come to the point of Salvation apart from explicitly confessing Christ. With regard to explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge, this Doctrine of Salvation also represents the point of divide among inclusivists themselves.

So, to consider the four categories which I have identified as important for the Reports and Debates of Synod, is it possible to define the inclusivist position on Christology? In general, the inclusivist tries to balance the *solus Christus* principle with the Doctrine of the universal salvific will of God, so Christology and the Doctrine of God are held together in balance. God has freely and finally communicated himself in his Revelation in Christ but this Revelation is not limited. Thus, Christ remains the sole cause of Salvation in the world but that his salvific grace may be mediated within historical and social structures without an explicit meeting with Christ. The logic of this is twofold: that grace can be mediated through the structures of non-Christian religions and that, if this is the case, then it means that *all* grace is not always and everywhere causally related to Christ and his Church. Salvation is always Christian Salvation. However, Salvation is ontologically, causally and epistemologically always related to Christ.

God is thus less transcendent, less 'other' than he is for exclusivists and there is room for human beings to feel that there is some way of reaching out to God themselves. Of course humans are still sinful and in need of Redemption in Christ, but by allowing the possibility of grace in history there is a sense in which God is 'inclusive' rather than 'exclusive' and humans are created as beings of unlimited openness to God's grace (Rahner's 'transcendental anthropology'). This feels like a very different starting point to that of human sin and inability to reach towards God. It is a theological position which begins with God's universal will to save. It has been developed by Orthodox theologians who make particular reference to God the Holy Spirit.¹⁵⁹ Other faiths are all derived from the same Spirit of God and the Holy Spirit is the bridge between the Incarnation and other faiths, working in them to bring to fruition the presence of Christ in their hearts.

The impact of this on Mission is that Christians can claim to name the Reality or Truth which is anonymously present in other faiths and operative in their rituals and ceremonies for Salvation. Thus, Christian Mission is to witness to the mystery of Christ who works, hidden and unperceived, within the rituals and institutions of other faiths. Given that this notion of grace must seek to objectivise itself, Mission is still clearly important. It does not change the necessity for Mission: Mission is still a command laid upon Christians by Jesus. But now its task is to bring to explicit consciousness the gift of grace which has been accepted implicitly. The urgency and imperative is not different from the exclusivist perspective, it is just that there is more

¹⁵⁹ For example, the work of the Greek Orthodox theologian, John S. Romanides, who represented the Orthodox Church at the WCC from 1973–1982. Romanides, J. S., *Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology of the Orthodox Catholic Church* (Pournaras, Thessaloniki, 1973). Also, for Russian Orthodoxy, see Lossky, V., *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (First published in 1944, but re-published in the UK under James Clarke and Co., London, 1991).

emphasis on uncovering Christ in the rituals and structures of the non-Christian religions and therefore, inevitably, more emphasis on listening than on proclamation alone. As a result, the idea of Dialogue as an integral to Mission becomes a reality.

The implications of this for the inclusivist's understanding of ecclesiology is that the Church becomes the sign inviting men and women of other world religions to move to explicit faith (*fides ex auditu*):¹⁶⁰ encouraging and assisting them to move from becoming Christians *in spe* to becoming Christians *in re*. As with exclusivism, it is still important that the non-Christian religions come to explicit faith in Christ which will involve baptism. The idea of *preparatio evangelicum* has been taken up by the Catholic Church in the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium – the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*. If the Holy Spirit is working through historical and social structures to bring non-Christians to recognition of Christ (through Dialogue and Witness), it is only within the Christian Church that this process reaches explicit expression and it is the Church which constitutes the difference between a Christian and a man or woman of another faith. This position has to be maintained because the problem with a theology of grace outside the structures of the Church is that the need for conversion and baptism becomes less urgent and the role of the Church is less clear. Thus, Rahner argues that neither Christology nor the Doctrine of God can be separated from the Church as Christ is mediated through the Church. In considering the work of Rahner, Race makes the point that at Vatican II (1962–1965) the Catholic Church moved from its position of *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* to a more inclusivist position, that is one where other religions could be seen as 'a preparation for the gospel', in its '*Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*'

¹⁶⁰ D'Costa, however, points out that the *fides ex auditu* position is missing from Rahner's position. See *Christianity and World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions*. (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2009), p.19.

(*Nostra Aetate*).¹⁶¹ However, Rahner goes beyond the *preparatio* in arguing that structures can be salvific and implicit faith alone suffices for Salvation. Vatican II did not accept either of these positions.

Although it was clear even in 1983 that there were different types of inclusivism, Race was nevertheless able to draw out certain parallels and similarities between them all, and these are worth noting as a way of tying together this section. He begins his chapter on inclusivism by demonstrating that this ‘type’ also has a long biblical pedigree; and this use of Scripture as a touch-stone is something which members of the General Synod of the Church of England repeatedly call for and which Report writers are concerned to develop.¹⁶² As well as the twin concepts of partial revelation granted to other faiths and the presence of the Spirit of God to teach or prepare other faiths to receive the gospel, the notion of fulfilment in Christ is a constant theme. Lastly, in view of the Incarnation, ‘nothing can remain outside Christ or be independent of his Headship.’¹⁶³

1.4.4 The Typology: pluralism

Race’s systematisation and analysis of exclusivism and inclusivism are presented in critical terms, for which he makes no apology.¹⁶⁴ His criticism of exclusivism is that it presents itself as being logically coherent without any need for Dialogue with other faiths at all. Of inclusivism he says that there is no answer to the question ‘why did

¹⁶¹ Declaration of the Second Vatican Council, passed by a vote of 2,221 to 88 of the assembled Bishops and promulgated on October 28th, 1965 by Pope Paul VI.

¹⁶² For example see the IFCG Report *Towards a Theology of Inter-Faith Dialogue* (Church House Publishing, London, 1984): in particular Chapter 4 ‘The Bible as Source of Authoritative Guidance’ pp.11–12, Chapter 5 ‘The Biblical Process’ pp.12–15, Chapter 6 ‘Biblical Pointers’ pp.15–27.

¹⁶³ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.62.

¹⁶⁴ ‘...it is impossible for me to conceal my own predilections ... this will be obvious as the reader delves into the text proper’. Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.8.

Christ come so late?'. In both cases, he argues that while these two 'types' have a biblical pedigree, the contemporary situation (outlined above, 4.i) is so different to anything the early Church Fathers faced that we must expect a totally different theological response. He also consistently raised the doctrinal question of the Incarnation, demonstrating its central importance for both exclusivists and inclusivists. The scene is set, therefore, for his argument that what is needed in response to 'the new situation challenging the Church' is a radical change of approach to Christian Doctrine, or what John Hick would come to call 'a Copernican Revolution.'¹⁶⁵

Race accepts that the pedigree of pluralism in Christian history is 'virtually non-existent before the modern period.' It is a recent phenomenon and Hick places it firmly in the context of 'liberal' theology; making reference to Hocking, Troeltsch and Toynbee.¹⁶⁶ In terms of 'recent theologies of religions', Race considers the work of Hick, Tillich and Cantwell-Smith. The notion of 'tolerance' as a principle of theological necessity leads ultimately to the idea that 'the relation between religions must take increasingly hereafter the form of a common search for truth.'¹⁶⁷ This demonstrates two of the key elements of pluralism, that knowledge of God is partial in all faiths and religions need to work together if the full truth about God is to be found. Unlike inclusivism, Christianity is not the final locus of religious truth.

¹⁶⁵ 'As the sun replaced the earth at the centre of the planetary universe so God ought to replace Christ and Christianity at the centre of the religious universe.' Hick, J., *God Has Many Names* (Macmillan, London, 1980), p.52. This concept is first used by John Robinson in *Honest to God* (SCM, London, 1963), p.18.

¹⁶⁶ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.71.

¹⁶⁷ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.72. Quote taken from Hocking, W.E., *Re-Thinking Missions*, (Harper & Row, NY, 1932), p.47.

But more than this, in pluralism there is the assumption that it is in the cave of the heart, beyond intellect and sense, that the true locus for an encounter between religions lies; that while all religions are conditioned by history and circumstance, all derive from one Source and all alike point to one Reality. It is argued that a straightforward historical comparison will never show this common essence because it is only found among believers who have ascended to the mystical heights of their own tradition to learn the truth of the non-duality of God and the soul: a unity which transcends all formulations.

According to this view, the Doctrine of the Incarnation (Christology) is the result of believers having absolutised their creeds and failing to penetrate the transcendent unity of religions. For pluralists, the Doctrine of the Incarnation should be understood as myth; that is as an expression of devotion and commitment by Christians and not as an ontological claim that in one particular place and at one particular time God chose to reveal himself definitively and uniquely in Christ. The *solus Christus* principle which is so important to both exclusivists and inclusivists is not compatible with the Christian belief in a God who desires Salvation for all people, according to pluralists. They do not understand the idea that God shows His mercy by offering redemption to sinful humans in giving them His only Son. For pluralists, *solus Christus* is a scandal of particularity and not evidence of God's compassion and mercy.

As we have already seen, Race considers himself a pluralist and the theologians whose work he looks at most in this chapter are Hick and Cantwell-Smith. For these theologians, the Doctrine of God is a God of Love who could not and would not consign non-Christians to eternal damnation. Initially, they were particularly

concerned with the ‘inculpably ignorant’, those who through no fault of their own have never heard the gospel. The Doctrine of an all-loving God is more important than the *solus Christus* principle. Indeed, Hick and Cantwell-Smith call for Christians to stop being ‘christo-centric’, or ecclesio-centric and to start being ‘theo-centric’, emphasising an all-loving God over a mythical Incarnation of God. It is God, argues Hick, to whom all religions are moving and from whom they gain their liberation and Salvation. However, in order to counter criticisms that theocentrism excluded the non-theistic religions (such as Buddhism), Hick developed a Kantian-type distinction between a divine noumenal reality ‘that exists independently and outside man’s perception of it’ which he calls the ‘Eternal One’, and the phenomenal world, ‘which is that world as it appears to our human consciousness’; in effect the various human responses to the Eternal One.¹⁶⁸ As a result, the pluralist’s understanding of God is of a transcendent, ‘noumenal’ Divine.

Assuming that all religious traditions are relative, what is the purpose of Mission for the pluralist? If the history of religions is a history of the Eternal One’s activity, without making any special claims for Christianity, then the Christian need not feel the imperative to convert men and women of other faiths. Is there any place for Mission in this world view? Mission is viewed in two ways: either as a searching out of other faiths in the common quest for truth, or as a joint effort in persuading the secular world of the truth of the search for ultimate meaning in life. For this reason, Race argues, neither of the other two ‘types’ can provide the best conditions for interfaith Dialogue. Dialogue, defined not as a comparison of concepts and symbols but as ‘the enabling of a true encounter between those spiritual insights and

¹⁶⁸ See D’Costa, G., ‘Theology of Religions’ in Ford, D., (ed.) *The Modern Theologians* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1997/2007), pp.628–9.

experiences which are found only at the deepest levels of human life.’¹⁶⁹ However, this is Mission completely redefined in a way that most members of the General Synod would not be able to relate to. In the Reports and Debates, I will identify some elements of the desire for religions to work together to provide a ‘faith’ witness to a secular world, but the idea of God as an ‘Eternal Real’ is not commonplace in the Church of England documents, despite the fact that Race is himself an Anglican priest. This leads to the question of whether it is possible to identify this third ‘type’ of the three-fold paradigm in an Anglican Theology of Religious Pluralism, and I hope to keep this question in mind in the following chapters.

Finally, what is the nature of the Church according to the pluralist position? The first thing to say is that many pluralists accuse the Church of imperialism, racism and sexism in its dealings with other religions because of the exclusivist approach to Mission and the imperative to spread the gospel. It attempts to find a ‘meta-solution’ that is outside any traditional religion. Pluralism has been criticised for not taking seriously the rituals and traditions of particular religions and the rituals and traditions of the Church fall prey to the same arguments. What is the purpose of the Church for pluralists? What roots Christians in a Christian understanding of the Ultimate Reality? Are the sacraments just local expressions of a global quest for truth? What reality do they signify? I have already suggested that it is not easy to find many representatives of the pluralist position in the Reports and Debates of General Synod but where there are some traces of pluralist sympathy, the Church is understood as the place where a new global ethic can be preached and where opportunities for Dialogue can be presented. I shall trace this wherever it is apparent in the analysis which follows.

¹⁶⁹ WCC *Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies* (WCC, Geneva, 1979), p.13. Quoted in Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.91.

In summary, Race acknowledges that pluralism raises important questions. Are the different notions of truth (often conflicting) to be viewed as complementary or identical, or is one fulfilled in the other? Tolerance for its own sake can lead either to indifference or syncretism, Race says. The fear of 'syncretism' is one raised many times in the Debates of the General Synod at this time and we shall look into it more closely in the chapters which follow. Race prefers the word 'relativism' to 'tolerance' and 'syncretism', and defines it as:

the belief that there is not one, but a number of spheres of saving contact between God and man. God's revealing and redeeming activity has elicited response in a number of culturally conditioned ways throughout history. Each response is partial, incomplete, unique; but they are related to each other in that they represent different culturally focussed perceptions of the one, ultimate divine reality. This is also sometimes termed pluralism and this is the expression preferred in the present work.¹⁷⁰

Again, Race is not afraid to raise the arguments against pluralism. So he notes that one of the problems with relativism is that it can undermine concern to distinguish good from bad: 'Stated starkly, it could mean that if all faiths are equally true then all faiths are equally false.'¹⁷¹ Of Hick's 'Copernican Revolution', he says 'how is it possible to say that different experiences stem from the same divine reality?'¹⁷² and 'by what criteria should we evaluate the different images of the divine?'¹⁷³ Race does not answer the question of criteria but says that the setting for evaluation must be Dialogue, evading the answer further when he says 'final unity of belief can only be eschatological, that is, located in the being of God himself.'¹⁷⁴ This, despite the fact

¹⁷⁰ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), pp.77–78.

¹⁷¹ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.78.

¹⁷² Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.84.

¹⁷³ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.87.

¹⁷⁴ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.87.

that the concept of eschatology or ‘completion’ is not common to all religions and that Buddhism does not recognise a God.

1.4.5 The Typology Evaluated

Since Race proposed the three-fold typology, there have been several objections made to it.¹⁷⁵ Initially, these objections were to do with trying to simply categorise that which was too complex: both in terms of looking at world religions *qua* ‘religion’ and also in terms of classifying the extremely diverse range of responses to world religions into just three. Ten years after he wrote the book and again in 2009, Race defended the typology against these criticisms by saying that there is enough of a recognisable family likeness among religions to categorise them together and that both for ‘religion’ and for the Theology of Religions, it is important to establish some framework for analysis, even while accepting the complexity of the subject matter and the possibility ‘of sustaining a number of variations.’¹⁷⁶ However, in 2009, D’Costa argued that the typology was no longer useful because it concealed the fact that all the ‘types’ were essentially exclusivist because pluralism is a form of secular modernity dressed up as Christianity and that inclusivism is still exclusivist in requiring an explicit encounter with Christ for eternal Salvation.¹⁷⁷ Ultimately, the differences on the most important question of Salvation (not truth) are blurred by the typology. For

¹⁷⁵ Race refers to these objections and categorises them into three – see his second edition, Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.150 – without naming those who have criticised him. He believes that ‘the inclusivist outlook has become the most favoured opinion among mainline writers’ since 1983 (p.150 and see note 2 on p.178 for an excellent summary of those he puts into this category). He also mentions those ‘dissatisfied with the perceived constrictions of the three-fold typology’ who have developed ‘alternative options’ (p.151) and puts into this category Lohead, D., *The Dialogical Imperative* (SCM, London, 1988), Knitter, P., *No Other Name?* (SCM, London/Orbis, Maryknoll, 1985) and Richards, G., *Towards a Theology of Religions* (Routledge, London, 1989), all of whom ‘nuance the spectrum of Christian responses very differently.’ (note 3, p.178). For an update on the arguments see Race, A., and Hedges, P., (ed) *Reader in Christian Theology of Religions* (SCM, London, 2009), pp. 82–112.

¹⁷⁶ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1993 second edition), p.150ff.

¹⁷⁷ D’Costa, G., *Christianity and the World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2009), p.34.

this reason, D'Costa offers a seven-graded classification on the precise question of Salvation; focussing on the means and goal of Salvation.¹⁷⁸ While I agree with D'Costa's new classification, and in particular his assessment of the three-fold paradigm as 'a useful raft, to cross the river and get us to where we are now',¹⁷⁹ I have chosen to remain with Race's three-fold paradigm as a tool for analysis of the Reports and Debates of the General Synod between 1966 and 1996. The reason for this is essentially historical: this typology provided the frame of reference for all language used in the Theology of Religions at the time. It becomes a useful and important heuristic tool as I try to understand the theological perspective of the Reports and Debates and whether they can be described as 'Practical Theology.' However, the historical perspective which this work inevitably offers, means that I am also able to draw some conclusions about the place of the three-fold typology in the Theology of Religions debate and for Anglican Theology. There is a sense in which the Debate is moving to pastures new with the recent work of D'Costa and others,¹⁸⁰ and as well as making use of the raft I would hope to be able to suggest some pointers to the route ahead for the Church of England in this new landscape. I shall trace elements of each of the 'types' in the Reports and Debates, I will also consider whether there may be a distinctive 'type' which can be described as an Anglican Theology of Religions.

1.5 Summary of Chapter 1

¹⁷⁸ His seven-graded classification of the precise question of how a person is saved is as follows: i) Through the Trinity (Trinity-centred), ii) Through Christ (Christ-centred), iii) Through the Spirit (Spirit-centred), iv) Through the Church (Church-centred), v) Through God conceived in a theistic, rather than trinitarian fashion (theocentric), vi) Through the Real, that is, beyond all classification (reality-centred), vii) Through good works (ethics-centred). D'Costa, G., *Christianity and the World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2009), p.34ff.

¹⁷⁹ D'Costa, G., *Christianity and the World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2009), p.34ff.

¹⁸⁰ See also Griffiths, P., 'Is there a doctrine of the descent into Hell?' in *Pro Ecclesia* XVII/3/Summer 2008 pp.257–268, and Helm, P., 'Are they few that be saved?', in M. de S. Cameron, N., (ed.), *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell* (Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1991), pp.256–81.

This chapter, which sets the scene for the work to come, is essentially offering an historical framework for this thesis. In considering the term ‘Anglican’, I have investigated the presuppositions behind the title of the work, while framing in more detail the question I wish to put about Anglican Theology. This led to consideration of the way in which Practical Theology understands the relationship between theology and practice. Having defended the need to take the ecclesiological background seriously in the Theology of Religion, and specifically the traditions and liturgy of the Church of *England* as Practical Theology, I then offered the reader an explanation of the internal system of governance and decision-making in the Church of England in order to understand the detailed analysis of the Reports and Debates which will now follow. Finally, I have expounded the system used to analyse the differing Theologies of Religion during the historical period which I am studying. In doing this, I hope I have provided the analytical context for the main body of this work.

CHAPTER 2

Multi-Faith Worship

In this second chapter, I turn to the primary sources of the Reports and Debates of the General Synod of the Church of England on the subject of multi-faith worship. By using the methodology of case studies in this way, I hope to reinforce the premise that Anglican Theology is Practical Theology.

2.1 Surveying the Scene

Thus far, in this thesis, I have set out three key themes: that there is such a thing as a distinctive Anglican Theology, that this claim can be illustrated by looking at the Church of England's response to Religious Pluralism and finally, that the best way to understand an *Anglican* Theology of Religions is as Practical Theology. One of the great advantages of Practical Theology is that it encourages the use of case studies to augment theoretical lines of thought. Consequently, this thesis takes as its case studies the Reports and Debates of the General Synod in four areas which are concerned with the Theology of Religions: multi-faith worship, redundant church buildings, Mission and Dialogue Debates and mixed-faith marriages.

By analysing those matters relating to Religious Pluralism using an historical trajectory, I hope it will be possible to trace the way in which the topics with which the IFCG were concerned are all integrally related to one another and build upon one another. However, there is some difficulty in following a 'simple' historical dynamic: if we are to see each Debate to its conclusion, we must necessarily be involved in a

certain amount of ‘decade-hopping’. So, for example, in this Chapter I open with the first Debate tabled for discussion at a National (rather than Diocesan) level on a subject of Religious Pluralism. The subject matter is multi-faith worship. However, the Debate in 1966 did not arrive at any practical conclusions and, unsurprisingly, the question of multi-faith worship did not go away. Thus it was that in 1988, the Board for Mission and Unity asked the IFCG, who had ‘been working on this subject for a number of years’,¹⁸¹ to prepare a booklet for practical use by clergy and laity alike. The Report was published in 1992. Both the Report and the Debates which followed it mark a conclusion to the questions first raised in 1966. While I will consider the question of multi-faith worship in two sections – on the 1960s and the 1990s, this first chapter does therefore span almost the whole of the historical period I am covering in this thesis.

At the same time as the IFCG were writing their Report on multi-faith worship, they had also been asked by the House of Bishops ‘to provide detailed advice to clergy in multi-faith parishes as to how they might fulfil their legal obligations when asked to conduct the *marriage* of an adherent of a faith other than the Christian faith.’¹⁸² This Report was also published in 1992. However, I am going to address the question of mixed-faith marriages at the end of this work¹⁸³ as a separate issue, and not in this chapter.

¹⁸¹ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), pp.5–6.

¹⁸² The final motion carried at the February Group of Sessions of the General Synod 1988, quoted in *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 15, p.4. Published 1992.

¹⁸³ Chapter 6 ‘Mixed-Faith Marriages’, p.288.

2.2 1960s

2.2.1 1966: Political, Sociological and Religious Background

England, in 1966, was just beginning to become aware of itself as religiously plural. As I mentioned in the Introduction, it has never been a religiously homogenous country but from 1945 onwards, those of other faiths from across the Empire were invited to make their home in England, in order to augment a workforce depleted by the Second World War. This trend continued as the Empire granted independence to one colony after another, so that countries like Nigeria and Kenya now became part of the British Commonwealth rather than the British Empire.¹⁸⁴ Adrian Hastings uses literature to illustrate what this rise in immigration felt like in some of the cities of England. So, he refers to Barbara Pym's novel *Quartet in Autumn* about a white spinster in London who discovers that the house she lives in has been bought by a Nigerian. 'Dismayed by the very warmth, friendliness and religious enthusiasm of the house congregations meeting noisily beneath her, Letty quickly moves away to lodge instead in the silence of a house belonging to a tiresome but churchy lady in her eighties.'¹⁸⁵ Between 1955 and 1962, two hundred and sixty thousand Caribbean immigrants entered England. One response to this was the Notting Hill Race Riots of the summer of 1958.¹⁸⁶ However, in the Church, the 1960s were characterised by two further responses to this new proximity of other races and faiths: on the one hand, the open questioning of previously held tradition and on the other, an increasing concern for social justice. The former is symbolised by the publication of *Honest to God* in

¹⁸⁴ Nigeria gained independence in 1960, Kenya in 1963. For a detailed exposition of this, see Hattersly, R., *50 years on: a prejudiced History of Britain since the War* (Little Brown & Co., London, 1997), Chapter 4 'Winds of Change: a superpower no more.' pp.116–151.

¹⁸⁵ Hastings, A., *A History of English Christianity, 1920–2000* (Collins, London, 1986/2001), pp.558–9. Pym's novel was published in 1977, but Hastings sees it as 'parable of the way things were going'.

¹⁸⁶ See Tiratsoo, N., (ed.) *From Blitz to Blair: A history of Britain since 1939* (Phoenix, London, 1997), Chapter V, 'Never-Never Land: Britain under the Conservatives 1951–1964.' by Dilwyn Porter, pp.116–7.

1963. Written by the academic and Anglican bishop, John Robinson, it sold nearly a million copies between 1963 and 1966. The phrase ‘a Copernican Revolution’, to which I referred in Chapter 1, was coined by Robinson in this book; referring as it did to a turn away from christo-centrism to theo-centrism. He was a biblical scholar from Cambridge and he drew together some of the more startling themes of some radical theologians of the past decades (Tillich, Bonhoeffer and Bultmann) and presented them in a small, 140-page book. His intention was a missionary one; he believed that in order to appeal to secular mentality, ‘Christianity must learn a new language in which the most fundamental categories of our theology – of God, of the supernatural, of religion itself – must go into the melting.’ Perhaps we are even called to a ‘Copernican Revolution in which the God of traditional theology must be given up in any form.’¹⁸⁷ This heralded a new doctrinal liberalism in the Church, which for many parishioners was uncomfortable and frightening. The movement for social justice in the 1960s is exemplified by the growth in Christian Aid Week into an event of national importance.¹⁸⁸ Christian Aid was the relief arm of the BCC and its rapid growth at this time shows how those in the Churches were anxious to concern themselves with the ex-colonies abroad (now the Commonwealth). In the mid 1960s, Church services on behalf of organisations like Christian Aid had begun to increase and they were prominent, public services. For example, in 1965, the Duke of Edinburgh attended a multi-faith ‘Ceremony of Religious Affirmation’ to mark the

¹⁸⁷ Robinson, J., *Honest to God* (SCM, London, 1963), pp.17–18. In 1979, Robinson wrote a book specifically on the subject of religious pluralism, *Truth is Two-Eyed* (SCM, London, 1979), in which he argues that Western Christianity, which places particular emphasis on the personality of God, the historicity of faith and the importance of the material world has been peering into the mystery of God with only one eye. He responds to Hick’s Myth of God Incarnate by saying that he ‘does not wish to jettison the doctrine of the Incarnation because for him, Jesus of Nazareth incarnates and expresses the divine agape more fully than any other such focal figure’. However, the Christian’s personal confession that Jesus is the clearest focus of God’s love is ‘always to be clarified, completed and corrected in dialogue.’ *Truth is Two-Eyed* (SCM, London, 1979) pp.125-6, 128-9.

¹⁸⁸ Hastings records that in the 1950s it had an income of £200,000, but by the 1960s it had grown to two and a half million. See Hastings, A., *A History of English Christianity, 1920–2000* (Collins, London, 1986/2001), p.543.

opening of the Commonwealth Arts Festival. In 1966, the Queen attended a similar service for Commonwealth Day. However, as the reference to the Notting Hill Race Riots of 1958 suggests, at a popular level, this rapid move from Empire to Commonwealth, from white homogeneity to multi-faith heterogeneity was something which would take time to assimilate by many Christians.¹⁸⁹

2.2.2 The Theological Background

All three of Race's 'types' were informed by the theology of this period of history. We have already seen how important Barth's work was to both the exclusivist and the inclusivist position and the theological background to this period is one that was shaped by the publication of the English translations of Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*.¹⁹⁰ There were two other important currents in theology during this time.¹⁹¹ The first was the rise of a recovery of the Spirit and therefore Trinitarian theology. The ground was laid for this by Vladimir Lossky's work *Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (1944, translated into English in 1957) and, later, the Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner's work, *The Trinity* (1967, translated in 1970).¹⁹² In Chapter 1, I explained how Race referred to the theology of the Holy Spirit as part of the inclusivist perspective, which used it to show how God's universal will to save is understood by identifying the work of the Spirit throughout history. Indeed, Race cites Rahner as one of the most important inclusivist theologians.

¹⁸⁹ For a pithy and amusing summary of the relationship between the Church of England and the State in this turbulent period, see Paxman, J., *The English: A Portrait of a People* (Penguin, London, 1999), Chapter 6, 'The Parish of the senses', pp.93–114.

¹⁹⁰ English translations of *Church Dogmatics* began in 1936 with Part I of Vol. I. This was reissued after the Second World War in 1949, followed by Part II in 1956. From then to 1969, 10 volumes appeared at regular intervals. The series remained unfinished.

¹⁹¹ I am indebted to Sykes' overview of this period in his Foreword to *Contemporary Doctrine Classics of the Church of England* (Church House Publishing, London, 2005), pp.xx–xxv.

¹⁹² By 1991, this theological movement of the Holy Spirit was so significant that the seventh WCC's Assembly in Canberra, in 1991 was entitled 'Come, Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation.'

Set against this, was the theological movement in response to the challenges posed by the rise of analytic philosophy: that without the backing of empirical observation, theological or metaphysical statements were meaningless. In 1963 the American Paul van Buren published *The Secular Meaning of God*, whilst in England, Robinson published *Honest to God*. In 1977, a collection of essays assembled by Hick was published as *The Myth of God Incarnate*.¹⁹³ Among the contributors were the Anglicans Don Cupitt, Dennis Nineham and Maurice Wiles. Dennis Nineham was on the Doctrine Commission of 1976 and Maurice Wiles was the Chairman of the same Doctrine Commission. In 1977, another Anglican, Geoffrey Lampe, published *God as Spirit*. This work pursued some of the theses of *The Myth of God Incarnate* and concluded that, preferable to describing Jesus as fully divine and fully human at the same time, was the concept of the Divine Spirit, inspiring, motivating and indwelling the human Jesus. This group of Anglican theologians all share elements of what Race called ‘pluralism’, particularly in their desire to move away from ‘christo-centrism’. I will refer later to the Doctrine Commission Report of 1976 and in Chapter 3, we will hear more from Geoffrey Lampe in both the Reports and Debates of the General Synod. It will be interesting to see whether this suggestion of a pluralist position amongst the Liberal tradition of the Church of England is borne out by the evidence of the Reports and Debates.

The 1980s saw fresh debate on the possibility of ‘objective theism’, led by the Anglican Don Cupitt. As with those who had contributed to *The Myth of God Incarnate*, Cupitt was motivated not only to make faith ‘real’ to the world of philosophy and ‘new-age religions’ (spiritualism, for example), but also to take

¹⁹³ I am indebted to Brown, C., *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800–2000* (Routledge, London, 2001/2009), Chapter 8, ‘The 1960s and secularisation’, pp.170–192 and Chapter 10, ‘Postscript: Was the Death Premature? The 1960s in religious history’, pp.216–219.

seriously the questions raised by an increasingly plural society in Britain. This desire to take other faiths seriously informed many of the theological works of this period and is an identifiable thread throughout the Doctrine Commission Reports of these three decades.¹⁹⁴ Cupitt referred to this new 'modern' age of the spirit as 'Christian Buddhism' ('Buddhist in form, Christian in content').¹⁹⁵ The storm which followed the publication of his book *Taking Leave of God*, was public enough for the BBC to initiate a documentary series called *The Sea of Faith* in 1984, supported by a publication of the same name.

In the 1976 Doctrine Commission Report *Christian Believing*, the Commission wrote that 'doctrine is relative to the culture of the age which produced it.'¹⁹⁶ This emphasis on the relationship between Doctrine and the culture of the age can be seen as typical of theologians in the Church of England since its inception; as Hooker wrestled with what was 'essential to the faith' and what was, in modern parlance, 'the culture of the age'. However, the statement that all Doctrine is relative is something which many Anglican theologians would wish to challenge, as we shall see. Another element of Anglicanism which I consider to be distinctive is the emphasis on theology 'done in community', which is to say that it is 'not a purely intellectual activity.'¹⁹⁷ As I have demonstrated previously, the Church of England's theology has always been 'done in community'; the parish system leading naturally to a type of Practical Theology which encompasses the rhythm of the seasons and of individual lives through liturgy and service. The Doctrine Commission of 1976 wrote 'To have the best hope of bearing fruit [theology] needs to go forward within the wholeness of Christian living,

¹⁹⁴ Sykes notes the 'Commission's recurrent concern for relations with adherents of other faiths.' *Contemporary Doctrine Classics* (Church House Publishing, London, 2005) Foreword, p.xxv.

¹⁹⁵ Cupitt, D. *Taking Leave of God* (SCM, London, 1980), p.xiii.

¹⁹⁶ *Christian Believing* (SCM, London, 1976), p.38.

¹⁹⁷ *Christian Believing* (SPCK, London, 1976), p.40.

which includes prayer, worship and service, arising from our encounter with God and neighbour and our surrender to the demands of discipleship in mutual love.’¹⁹⁸ There were profound theological questions which needed to be addressed, in some serious internal Debates within the Church of England and if my claim from Chapter 1 is correct, that much of the theology of the Church of England is to be found in its liturgy, it is not surprising that the first time concern was raised about other faiths in the Church Assembly was with the question of the liturgy of the Commonwealth Day Service. When the General Synod was still the Church Assembly, a resolution was passed in the autumn session of the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury, that ‘this house views with concern the holding of multi-religious services in Christian Churches.’

2.2.3 1966: Debate on Multi-Faith Worship

In October 1966, the Lower House of the Convocation of Canterbury debated a motion tabled by the Revd E. G. Stride.¹⁹⁹

MULTI-RELIGIOUS SERVICES.

MOTION PROPOSED *The Revd E. G. Stride*

“That this House views with concern the holding of multi-religious services in Christian Churches.”

Stride proposed the motion with reference to the service held in St Martin-in-the Fields. He opened his speech by stating that he was ‘not against Dialogue’ and that he

¹⁹⁸ *Christian Believing* (SPCK, London, 1976), p.40.

¹⁹⁹ The write-up for the Reports of Proceedings in the House of Convocations is much less detailed than in the General Synod. Speeches are not quoted directly but paraphrased and there is no evidence of which Diocese the speaker is from. Nor is it clear who chaired the Debate. Therefore the detail which I will include for the General Synod Debates will be far more comprehensive than this. When referring to the Debates, I will state *RP* (for Reports of Proceedings), followed by *10/66* (for the month – October – and the year – 1966).

understood ‘the pastoral responsibilities’ which everyone faced ‘with regard to those of other religions.’²⁰⁰ Here we see that even though he is speaking against the holding of multi-faith worship in churches, the pastoral imperative of the Established Church is tempering any potential exclusivism. This is something that is distinctive of the Church of England and there is no doubt that it has an impact on the theology of both those speaking in the Debates and those writing the Reports, as I shall demonstrate later. Stride goes on to talk about a mixed-faith marriage in which the Muslim husband fully understood that the wedding was a Christian wedding, although the hymns chosen were those which ‘a Unitarian could have sung anyway’.²⁰¹ He does not go on to develop this line of argument, although we are left to infer from this that he would be happy to accept a *Christian* service at which people of other faiths were made welcome.

The next point Stride goes on to make is about the impact such services have on his ability to proclaim the good news and on the Mission of the Church more widely. This is a theme which members of Synod returned to very often, particularly in the Debates on redundant church buildings (see Chapter 3 of this thesis). In 1966, one national newspaper (he does not say which) had ‘devoted a whole page to the subject of multi-religious services’ and the fact that they gave the impression to the man in the street that ‘all religions are the same’. Stride then went on to talk about the difficulties which this had caused those who were ‘trying to witness about the Lord Jesus Christ.’²⁰²

There is more than just anxiety about Mission in this speech, there is also an understanding of the impact of such services on the Church of England’s ecclesiology.

²⁰⁰ *RP Lower House, Convocation of Canterbury 10/66*, the Revd E. G. Stride, p.386.

²⁰¹ *RP Lower House, Convocation of Canterbury 10/66*, the Revd E. G. Stride, p.387.

²⁰² *RP Lower House, Convocation of Canterbury 10/66*, the Revd E. G. Stride, p.387.

As we will see in the Debates on redundant church buildings, many Anglicans have a strong sense of attachment to the building in which they worship and the symbolic nature of Church Fabric for their faith. Indeed, I have already suggested, with Sykes and others, that much of Anglican Theology is to be found in its liturgy. In 1966, Stride finishes his speech with reference to the fact that these multi-religious services were being held ‘in the presence of the Lord’s Table and the Font, two things which spoke of something very precious to Christians’.²⁰³

The next speech in this short Debate was from someone who opposed the Motion. Just as the Reports always have members from several different traditions of the Church of England, so in Synod (or, at this time, Convocation) the common practice has always been to follow a speech in favour of the motion, with one against. It came from Kenneth Cragg, the renowned Islamic scholar and clergyman.²⁰⁴ What is interesting about Cragg’s response to the Motion is that it appears initially to be from the pluralist perspective. He begins with the fact that in 1966 ‘there is an increasing search for world unity ... for one single voice at one time to address the whole human family.’²⁰⁵ We have seen how this idea of unity of the world religions is an important part of the pluralist position. Cragg went on to talk about the need for ‘tolerance’, a word which was so central to the work of Hocking and Toynbee and which Race highlighted in his chapter on pluralism in *Christians and Religious Pluralism*.²⁰⁶ Cragg even went so far as to call for a ‘recovery of natural theology particularly against the assertive

²⁰³ *RP Lower House, Convocation of Canterbury 10/66*, the Revd E. G. Stride, p.388.

²⁰⁴ The Revd Canon Kenneth Cragg, D.Phil was Professor of Arabic and Islamics at Hartford Seminary, Connecticut before holding the position of Warden of St Augustine’s College, Canterbury in 1966. In 1970 he was made Bishop of Jerusalem. He has written a great many books about Islam. One of his earliest books was also the most ground-breaking, Cragg, K., *The Call of the Minaret* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1956).

²⁰⁵ *RP Lower House, Convocation of Canterbury 10/66*, the Revd Canon A. K. Cragg, p.388.

²⁰⁶ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), pp.72–73.

autonomy of the secularisers ... religions need each other', he said.²⁰⁷ In later Synod Debates, on the subject of multi-faith worship, members would express their fear of 'natural theology', but here Cragg finishes his speech by saying that while he believed that it was 'within the mind of Christ' to make churches available to other faiths, he was only able to make any of the statements about religions working together 'precisely because of one's faith in the distinctiveness of one's own religion and in its uniqueness.'²⁰⁸ Thus, just as Cragg clearly has many features of the 'pluralist' in this speech, it becomes clear at the end that he is best described as an 'inclusivist', as no pluralists would wish to reaffirm Christianity's uniqueness when they believe all religions to be relative.

He was followed by the Revd A. J. K. Goss, who raised some points which would have been at the heart of the exclusivist perspective: the services would have caused fewer problems had there been 'some pronouncement' by 'a sufficient authority' which would explain that those involved were not saying that 'all religions are equal', were not saying that 'one need no longer preach Christ crucified as the sole way to salvation' and were telling Christians that 'they must no longer seek the conversion of the Muslim.'²⁰⁹ This is a man deeply concerned with the importance of proclamation and conversion, although once again there is no time for him to develop this argument, so these are the only statements we have from which to infer his ideas. The Debate seems to be between exclusivism and pluralism but with both types showing evidence of the emphasis on pastoral responsibility which characterises members of an Established Church. The Debate was concluded with a short speech from Stride

²⁰⁷ *RP Lower House, Convocation of Canterbury 10/66*, the Revd Canon A. K. Cragg, p.389.

²⁰⁸ *RP Lower House, Convocation of Canterbury 10/66*, the Revd Canon A. K. Cragg, p.389.

²⁰⁹ *RP Lower House, Convocation of Canterbury 10/66*, the Revd A. J. K. Goss, p.390.

saying that ‘the holding of this kind of service in a Christian Church...was a very serious thing and a proper subject of concern for the House.’²¹⁰

The Motion was passed.

A few months later, in 1967, the General Secretaries of the larger missionary societies in Britain and Canon David Paton, Secretary of the Missionary and Ecumenical Council of the Church Assembly (MECCA), issued a statement which concluded: ‘while true Dialogue between Christians and adherents of other religions is to be encouraged, local churches should be strongly advised not to provide for interfaith services.’²¹¹

2.3 The 1990s

2.3.1 1991: The Open Letter

The decision by the BMU to commission a Report on multi-faith worship grew out of a groundswell of popular opinion about the ‘growing number’ of services described as ‘multi-faith’, ‘many of them receiving much more prominence and public attention than was the case in previous decades.’²¹² The first interfaith service had been held in 1942 by the World Congress of Faiths in memory of its founder, Sir Frances Younghusband. From 1953, the year of the Coronation, the World Congress of Faiths held such a service annually. The first Commonwealth Day Service was held in St Martin-in-the-Fields in 1966 and attended by the Queen. The ‘prominence and public attention’ to which the Report refers, was an Open Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, published in national newspapers in the first week of Advent, 1991 and

²¹⁰ *RP Lower House, Convocation of Canterbury 10/66*, the Revd E. G. Stride, p.391.

²¹¹ *Multi-Faith Worship*, (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter II, para. 8, p.11.

²¹² *Multi-Faith Worship*, (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Preface, p.5.

signed by more than two thousand Anglican clergy.²¹³ In it, they expressed their disquiet over the growing number of acts of multi-faith worship and called for the ‘prevention of gatherings for inter-faith worship and prayer in the Church of England.’²¹⁴ They had in mind particularly the annual Commonwealth Day Observance at Westminster Abbey as well as a number of Cathedral multi-faith events organised by the Worldwide Fund for Nature. The first of these did not claim to be a service (hence the use of the word ‘observance’), but it was – as one signatory of the Open Letter made clear²¹⁵ – held in Westminster Abbey and attended by the Queen, who is the head of the Church of England.²¹⁶ At this ‘observance’, there were no prayers ‘through Jesus Christ our Lord’, but there were readings from the sacred writings of five different religions, a passage from St Luke and a meditation, led by the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.²¹⁷

2.3.2 1992: The IFCG Report

The IFCG was commissioned to write a Report which would be submitted to the General Synod, as an opening for discussion.²¹⁸ It was not a set of ‘official guidelines’ as the BMU did not believe there could be any general agreement on such guidelines until the Synod had had the chance to hear the strong differences of opinion on this

²¹³ See *Church Times*, 6 December 1991, for coverage.

²¹⁴ A helpful overview of this period can be found in Parsons, G., *The growth of religious diversity: Britain from 1945* (Routledge, London, 1993), Traditions, Vol. 1. pp.45–7.

²¹⁵ Mrs Dorothy Chatterly, General Synod Member (*Carlisle*) of the House of Laity. See *RP 7/92 23/2* pp.337–8. The second set of numbers in this reference is the GS catalogue number. It is not present in the *RP House of Convocation of Canterbury* because the catalogue begins with the General Synod in 1970. The town or city in brackets (eg: *Carlisle*) denotes the Diocese from which the member of Synod has been elected.

²¹⁶ See *RP 7/92 23/2*, Mrs Dorothy Chatterly (*Carlisle*), pp.337–8.

²¹⁷ It was not until 2000 and the publication of D’Costa’s *Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* that there was any systematic study of inter-religious prayer. This came at the same time as discussions about how the Churches would celebrate the Millennium and also some speculative discussion about what a Coronation service would look like in multicultural Britain. See the document ‘*Christian Parameters of Multi-Faith Worship Together*’ at www.ctbi.org. (checked July 2010).

²¹⁸ As a document for General Synod, the Report *Multi-Faith Worship* has a GS number: GS1011.

issue.²¹⁹ This Commonwealth Day Observance service is peculiar to an Established Church and symbolic of other services which the Church of England hosts, such as the Remembrance Day services and services to mark times of national celebration or mourning. The theological questions behind such services – can we pray together with members of other faiths? – are critical questions which need to be investigated; but it is in the context of the National Church that they are often first raised because of the very practical relevance which they take on in that setting. It is for this reason that it seems correct to argue that the Church of England's theology can be called a 'Practical Theology'.

There are, of course, those who would argue that having your theology driven by the fact of establishment is reason enough for disestablishment. However, I believe that establishment offers the Church of England a remarkable opportunity for what I am calling in this thesis 'mutually corrective theology', that is, a theology which is compelled to consider the full theological complexity of the Doctrine behind a practical matter whilst believing that the truth will be uncovered through 'mutual correction' and Dialogue. These two things are not necessarily the same thing. Dialogue, in the deep sense of the word (as we shall see in Chapter 4), requires a real attempt to listen without judgement and to walk in the shoes of the other person. The result of this may be 'mutual correction', but it may not. The 'theology of mutual correction' is, in my opinion, distinctively Anglican and is something which can trace its roots to Hooker's *Via Media* and the determination of Elizabeth I to chart a middle way between the Reformers and the Roman Catholic Church. It is enhanced by the

²¹⁹ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Preface, p.5.

Synodical process, the policy of having as wide a range of ‘churchmanship’²²⁰ and theological difference as possible on the Committee which produces any Report,²²¹ and the very fact of establishment. To illustrate it with this particular case in point, while some in the Church argued that the finality of Christ rendered multi-faith services impossible,²²² the greater majority were faced with the legal fact of hospitality as the starting point for a theology of Dialogue and friendship. It was this ‘fact’ which meant that the ‘exclusivism’ of those in the Church of England at this time²²³ was never allowed to be a rigid ‘narrowly exclusivist’ perspective, as the authors of *Multi-Faith Worship* would make clear at the beginning of their section on theology.²²⁴

The *Multi-Faith Worship* Report by the IFCG in 1992, is divided into nine short chapters, of which one considers ‘Some Theological Perspectives’²²⁵ and includes an extensive bibliography at the end. It begins by pre-empting those who might still believe that this a minority issue for the Church,²²⁶ with a series of real-life ‘situations and questions’. So, for example:

The new mayor is a Sikh, but has asked for a Christian chaplain and a civic service in the parish church to mark his year of office. Nevertheless it is clear that he would be glad if some affirming

²²⁰ ‘Churchmanship’ refers to whether individuals consider themselves to be from the Anglo-Catholic, Evangelical or Liberal tradition of the Church of England.

²²¹ The Report in question, *Multi-Faith Worship*, acknowledges that ‘each of the three approaches just outlined [Race’s three-fold typology] are represented among the authors of this booklet.’ para. 32, p.19.

²²² *RP* 7/92 23/2, Mrs Dorothy Chatterly (*Carlisle*), p.338.

²²³ Amongst whom, as we shall see, were figures as prominent as the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey and the Rt Revd Michael Nazir Ali.

²²⁴ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter III, para. 32, p.19.

²²⁵ The nine chapters are: I Situations and Questions, II Not a New Question, III Some Theological Perspectives, IV Visiting the Places of Worship of Other Faiths, V Christian Services Attended by People of Other Faiths, VI ‘Multi-Faith Worship’: Why, Who and Where?, VII ‘Serial Multi-Faith Services’, VIII ‘Multi-Faith Services with an Agreed Common Order’, IX The Legal Position.

²²⁶ So, for example, in the debate which followed this report, Mrs Chatterly said: ‘Living in remote rural Cumbria as I do, the practical problems are, frankly, elsewhere.’ *RP* 7/92 23/2, Mrs Dorothy Chatterly (*Carlisle*), p.337.

reference to his own faith could be included in the worship. He suggests a reading from the Guru Granth Sahib.

*Is this request acceptable? What will it mean as part of a Christian service? If it is refused, what impression is being given about the place of Sikhs in civic life and of Christian tolerance? If the next mayor asks for a service in the mosque or synagogue of which he or she is a member, how should Christian councillors respond?*²²⁷

After listing eight very different situations and raising several questions about each, the IFCG makes the point that while ‘it is not possible to offer ready-made responses to each and every situation ... some principles and suggestions can be proposed that may help people to develop good practice.’²²⁸ Before that, however, they tackle the ‘problem of definition’ which the term ‘multi-faith worship’ presents; pointing out that it can be used to cover a wide range of events. ‘These include, at one end, services of one faith at which people of other faiths may be present in the congregation, and, at the other, events in which elements from a variety of religions are blended together. These are not stark alternatives. Between them lies a range of types of event.’²²⁹ Even the term ‘worship’ is contentious, with many alternatives being preferred: ‘celebration’, ‘ceremony’, ‘event’, ‘meditation.’

The next chapter of the Report looks in some detail at the work which has already been done on this question of multi-faith worship. I noted the resolution passed at Convocation in 1966 and the statement made by MECCA in 1967, at the beginning of this chapter. Next came a Report on the statement, made by the BCC in 1968 which included four ‘aims’ of Dialogue and communion with those of other faiths. However,

In pursuing these aims, Churches should scrupulously avoid those forms of inter-faith worship which compromise the

²²⁷ *Multi-Faith Worship*, Chapter I, para. 1c, p.8.

²²⁸ *Multi-Faith Worship*, Chapter I, para. 2, p.10.

²²⁹ *Multi-Faith Worship*, Chapter I, para. 3, p.10.

distinctive faiths of the participants and should ensure that Christian witness is neither distorted nor muted.²³⁰

In 1974, the World Congress of Faiths produced a Report by an ecumenical group of Christian clergy and edited by the Anglican priest, Marcus Braybrooke.²³¹ This Report believed that interfaith worship ‘tried to understand why some Christians conscientiously oppose any form of inter-faith worship’, encouraged people of one faith to attend the worship of other faiths and ultimately recognised a need for ‘specially designed acts of common worship which would not replace the normal worship of any religious tradition.’²³²

In 1977, two Anglican priests published a booklet in the evangelical series Grove Booklets, called *Inter-Faith Worship?*²³³ The booklet sought to ‘raise issues of principle’ in the light of ‘Britain’s new pluralism.’ After an examination of worship, the authors questioned whether people of different faiths ‘are doing intrinsically the same thing when they worship, or whether it is a case of separate and different things being done side by side.’ The five guidelines they suggested are as follows: 1. It is best to set limited terms. 2. They must be based on mutual respect. 3. They should grow out of prior relationship. 4. They must avoid theological inconsistency. 5. They must avoid situational dishonesty. The authors concluded that ‘within these guidelines [worship] would be for the glory of God and the service of man’. They concluded that if five guidelines were adhered to, then it might be possible ‘for worship based in a

²³⁰ ‘Statement on Inter-Faith Services’ BCC, 1968 in *Multi-Faith Worship*, Chapter II, paras 9, 10, pp.10–11.

²³¹ Braybrooke, M., (ed.) *Inter-faith Worship* (Galliar, Scotland, 1974).

²³² Braybrooke, M., (ed.) *Inter-faith Worship* (Galliar, Scotland, 1974), p.18.

²³³ Akehurst, P., and Wootton, R. W. F., *Inter-Faith Worship?* (Grove Booklets, Nottingham, 1977).

creaturely, behavioural stance, exploring techniques of worship together, affirming values together and engaging in the silence of listening and meditation together.’²³⁴

In 1977, the BCC set up the Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths²³⁵ and in 1979, the Church of England made use of a working group of ‘Consultants on Inter-faith Relations’ from within this, the forerunner to the IFCG. The Consultants published a Report at the back of an in-house publication called *Ends and Odds* in 1980.²³⁶ It distinguished between three types of service and regarded all three as acceptable, offering comments and suggestions on each in turn and concluding with advice on attending the worship of other faiths.²³⁷ It saw multi-faith services as ‘occasional additions to the regular liturgical life of the Christian Church and not a substitute for it’ and made the statement that ‘Inter-faith is not a new religion ... Equality is of believers and not of beliefs.’²³⁸ It is clear that the 1992 Report *Multi-Faith Worship* built upon and developed this 1980 publication.²³⁹ Finally, in this second chapter of the 1992 Report, brief attention is paid to the 3/1981 publication by CRPOF *Guidelines for Dialogue in Britain* and also the 1983 CRPOF publication *Can We Pray Together? Guidelines on Worship in a Multi-Faith Society*. The 1992 IFCG Report states that ‘The present booklet aims to build on this previous work and offer fuller material on these subjects’,²⁴⁰ in particular the types of service and planning a service.

²³⁴ All quotations taken from *Multi-Faith Worship*, Chapter II, paras 14–16, pp.13–14.

²³⁵ Hereafter, CRPOF.

²³⁶ Archbishops’ Inter-faith Consultants, ‘Report of a Working Group on Inter-faith Services and Worship’, in *Ends and Odds* (22/3/1980).

²³⁷ A. Christian services with guest participation from other faiths. B. Inter-faith services of the serial multi-faith type. C. Inter-faith services with an agreed common order of service.

²³⁸ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter II, para. 20, p.15.

²³⁹ For explicit reference to this see footnote 5 in *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter II, para. 20, p.15.

²⁴⁰ *Multi-Faith Worship*, (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter II, para. 25, p.16.

Thus the IFCG sets up the context for this Report; but the largest chapter, which can be seen as the framework for the whole, is dedicated to the theology behind multi-faith worship.²⁴¹ Immediately it turns to the 1984 Report, *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* and sets out its intention to ‘trace some theological issues [from the conclusion of *Towards*] relating to the issues of multi-faith worship.’²⁴² In this 1992 Report, Alan Race’s three-fold paradigm is made use of as ‘three theoretical positions: exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism’ and this becomes the structure for the theological discussion which follows; although by 1992, the authors do at least acknowledge some of the questions raised in the academic world about the typology. So, for example the fact that ‘each category may involve a variety of standpoints’, that ‘it is possible to embrace elements of each’ and finally, that ‘different writers tend to define the categories rather differently’.²⁴³

From here, the authors summarise the work of three theologians, Leslie Newbigin, Kenneth Cracknell and John Hick, as examples of the three positions of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism; whilst going on to remind readers of that most particular of features of the Reports of the Church of England, that ‘each of the three approaches just outlined are represented among the authors of this booklet.’²⁴⁴ See my earlier

²⁴¹ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter III, ‘Some Theological Perspectives’, pp.17-30.

²⁴² *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter III, para. 26, p.17. IFCG, *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* (CHP, London, 1984/1986). There is some difficulty here in making reference to a Report which I have not yet introduced. However, as stated in the introduction, I have decided to use an historical framework for the four topics (multi-faith worship, redundant church buildings, Mission and Dialogue Debates and mixed-faith marriages) and also to follow them through to their historical conclusion. This gives some idea both of the piecemeal way in which the Church of England ‘does’ theology, whilst still having the advantage of hindsight in tracing a single topic through an historical period.

²⁴³ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter III, para. 27, 28, p.17.

²⁴⁴ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter III, para. 32, p.19. CHAIRMAN: The Rt Revd the Bishop of Wolverhampton. MEMBERS: The Revd Dr Peter Forster, The Revd Dr Christopher Lamb, The Rt Revd Michael Nazir-Ali, The Revd Alan Race, The Revd Canon Michael Wolfe, The Revd Canon Roger Hooker, The Revd Dr Clinton Bennett. Representatives: Mr Alan Brown (B of Ed), The Revd Dr Ian Kenway (BSR), The Revd Dr Brian Russell (ABM), The

reference to this in Chapter 1 (p.45) as an example of distinctively Anglican methodology in ‘doing’ theology. My argument is that this is evidence for a ‘mutually corrective’ theology. However, the difficulties of this kind of approach are also clear, and the authors are prepared to acknowledge that:

Our attempts to achieve a consensus upon the central theological, and especially Christological, issues which arise have to a significant degree failed, and further attention to the theology of multi-faith questions will clearly be required in the coming years, even if a full consensus on such issues is never likely to be reached.²⁴⁵

The group then goes on to say that the rest of the chapter on theology is written largely from the perspective of those ‘who place considerable emphasis upon the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ’, from where ‘the strongest opposition to multi-faith worship comes.’ We have seen how both inclusivists and exclusivists agree on the uniqueness and finality of Christ, but that the point of difference comes about the questions of salvific grace found outside Christianity. The reason the group have begun with the exclusivist position is that this is where the greatest opposition to multi-faith worship is found and this is therefore the perspective that needs to work out its own answer to the tension between its theology and the imperative of hospitality that comes with being the Established Church. A theology of mutual correction is not about writing a Report in which each perspective can have its say recorded in print, it is about trying to work towards a theology that reflects the truth of a distinctive ecclesiology, which as we have seen in the Thirty-Nine Articles is concerned both with the confession of the uniqueness of Christ and also the desire for unity in order to *include* as many variations of Christian belief as possible under the

Revd Peter Speck (HCC), Dr Elaine Sugden (PWM), Dr Owen Cole (Archbishop’s Consultants). SECRETARY: Mr Colin Podmore.

²⁴⁵*Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992). The authors have already identified Bishop Nazir-Ali as taking an ‘exclusivist’ approach (para. 29, p.18), and with both Alan Race and Bishop Nazir-Ali on the same committee, their inability to reach a consensus is not entirely surprising.

umbrella of the Established Church.²⁴⁶ In this 1992 IFCG Report, this is in an attempt to both ‘illustrate how such a theology [exclusivism] need not preclude some forms and occasions of multi-faith worship and indicates how Christian discernment in this area might proceed.’²⁴⁷ However, in taking this approach, there is a legitimate question to be asked, which is whether pluralism is a position that is either developed, or fully heard, in the Church of England’s documents and Debates. Since the recent academic Debate about the typology has led some theologians to ask whether pluralism itself is not just another form of exclusivism, I believe it is important to trace this question through the material that follows.²⁴⁸

The next part of the Report includes three sections on ‘The Witness of Scripture’, on ‘Exploring Worship’, ‘Worship for People of Other Faiths’ and lastly a section which addresses people’s fear of ‘Idols and Images’.²⁴⁹ Certainly, in terms of the quantity of material given to this section, it is clearly considered to be important. All of it will have been agreed by those on the Committee who considered themselves exclusivist, but there is no doubt that this is an exploration of *ways forward* for exclusivist theology.²⁵⁰ The Report draws three principles from Scripture. First, that ‘we often find Christ where we least expect him’ (for example in Matthew 25). Secondly, that ‘we should be open to a particular moving of God’s Spirit in particular

²⁴⁶ See footnotes 70 and 71, in Chapter 1.

²⁴⁷ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter III, para. 32, p.19.

²⁴⁸ “The pluralisms of Hick and Knitter are indebted to agnostic liberalism, thus imposing upon all religions an exclusive hurdle which they must conform to...unwittingly, Hick and Knitter stifle real religious differences which are now encoded within their exclusive narrative ... a narrative that tops religions pursuing their own agendas on their own terms. They are reality-centred and ethics-centred exclusivists. It is also quite right to claim that they are hard-line exclusivists for agnostic liberalism.” D’Costa, G., *Christianity and the World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2009), p.35.

²⁴⁹ However, this is the section that receives particular criticism in the Debate, as we shall soon see.

²⁵⁰ For many who later came to debate it in General Synod, there was resistance to the idea of exploring ways forward within the exclusivist position: what many members required was a restatement of the belief in Salvation through explicit faith in Christ alone. ‘This report is woefully inadequate ... Its interpretation of Scripture will not stand scrutiny. That in itself is reason for rejecting it.’ *RP 7/92 23/2* The Revd Tony Higton (*Chelmsford*), p.344.

circumstances', using examples from Namaan, Jethro and Nebuchadnezzar. Thirdly, that 'individual Christians have to weigh their actions in the light of the particular Christian community of which they are a part', (using 1 Corinthians 8–10).²⁵¹

When the Report goes on to look more closely at 'Worship', there is recognition of the fear of idolatry and syncretism, but in a phrase which may reflect the Church of England's own sense of provisionality, the authors say that 'as all worship is exploration, perhaps we need to focus more on the intention of our worship, acknowledging that, precisely because it passes into the mystery of God it will be provisional and anticipatory, pointing beyond itself.'²⁵² Comparing this with 'worship' for people of other faiths, and with the caveat that 'it is not possible to expound what worship is for each faith tradition here', the Report states that 'perhaps it can at least be said that all religious traditions seem to have at least two styles of worship: one is a highly formalised official kind of set piece ... and one is much more informal, fluid and commonplace.'²⁵³ Under the heading of 'Idols and Images', the authors remark that 'there is no doubt that Christian participation in multi-faith activities with elements of common worship will have attendant dangers.'²⁵⁴ However, the point they then go on to make is that certainly Jews and Muslims and indeed many Sikhs and Hindus, will share strong convictions about idolatry. 'It is easier to denounce idolatry than to define it. Put simply, idolatry is the worship of something less than God.'²⁵⁵ The Report does not denounce Hindu worship as 'idolatrous', but instead it puts the emphasis on the individual Christian: 'If, however, Christians feel that they themselves are being drawn into idolatrous worship, it may be best for them to leave

²⁵¹ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), pp.21–22.

²⁵² *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter III, para. 47, p.25.

²⁵³ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter III, para. 52, 53, p.28.

²⁵⁴ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter III, para. 53, p.28.

²⁵⁵ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter III, para. 25, p.16.

politely.’²⁵⁶ One of the elements of pluralism which I highlighted in Chapter 1 was the fact that it looked for a meta-narrative which would unite all the religions and was often criticised for not taking the ritual and ceremonies of the individual religion seriously. In looking at the question of multi-faith worship, the Church of England had to take seriously the idea of both its own rituals and ceremonies and those of other faiths. In both writing the Report and in the Debates which followed, it was clear – once again – that liturgy and worship are of central importance to Anglicans, whichever tradition they come from.

This is also apparent in the next chapter ‘Visiting The Places of Worship of Other Faiths’, which is broadly divided into two areas: reasons why a Christian should and could do this with integrity, and then practical details of what to expect if you go to a Synagogue, a Mosque, a Gurdwara, a Temple or a Meditation Hall.²⁵⁷ It makes the point that ‘a decision to wear religious slogans such as ‘Jesus saves’ can be tactless and offensive²⁵⁸ and reminds Christians that Jews and Muslims ‘are well aware that they have fundamental differences of belief with Christians’.²⁵⁹ This section also comes with the warning to learn as much as you can about this particular place of worship beforehand and to be personally aware of the question, ‘where does observation end and participation begin?’ ‘In some cases, visitors might find themselves feeling that they are worshipping inwardly.’²⁶⁰ The authors suggest that whether this is ‘right’ or not depends on the individual Christian; but they do make a few warnings about participating in acts taking place within Hindu Temples and Buddhist Meditation Halls. ‘Hindus, Sikhs and some Buddhists ... usually claim that

²⁵⁶ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter III, para. 59, p.30.

²⁵⁷ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter IV, pp.31–37.

²⁵⁸ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter IV, para. 77, p.36.

²⁵⁹ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter IV, para. 67, p.32.

²⁶⁰ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter IV, para. 63, p.31.

all truly religious people are making the same journey by different routes.’²⁶¹ But for the Christian, participation in Hindu worship may mean participation in singing hymns to Krishna and bowing before Hanuman and Ganesh.²⁶² Finally, the authors ask Christians to be very aware of the symbolism of their visit. Particularly in an area where the other faith community is disadvantaged, ‘visiting the Temple or the Mosque ... is itself a “statement” of the good news of Christian care.’²⁶³ In other words, just the visit alone can be enough to demonstrate hospitality and care from members of the Established Church, as long as it is done with respect and humility.

So, do these same elements apply when people of other faiths attend Christian services? The authors assume this to be the case but go on to make a few very practical points for the Christians who are hosting members of another faith. Do not sit them in the front row where they will not be able to see when people sit or stand. Freedom should be accorded them to participate or not and this should be made explicit before worship. In particular, if it is a Eucharist, then it should be explained that they will not be invited to share the bread and wine.²⁶⁴ Japanese Buddhists, for example, might otherwise present themselves for communion out of courtesy to their hosts.²⁶⁵ There is some discussion as to whether Christians should select appropriate material for the services and ways in which this might be done (giving specific examples of ‘inclusive’ hymns and readings). However, the authors fail to remember the connection between liturgy and theology in the Church of England. This section

²⁶¹ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter IV, para. 67, p.32.

²⁶² *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter IV, para. 64, p.31.

²⁶³ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter IV, para. 69, p.33. There is perhaps not enough recognition here of the importance of the relationship which needs to have been built beforehand. There is always the possibility, which the authors do not seem to allow for, that a visit to a Temple or Mosque by a ‘converting religion’ could also be viewed with suspicion and mistrust.

²⁶⁴ There is no mention in the text of whether they could come up for a blessing.

²⁶⁵ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter V, para. 86, p.38.

comes across as rather awkward and patronising, not least because the authors admit that ‘the occasion is supposed to be an opportunity for guests to experience an act of Christian worship.’²⁶⁶ Nevertheless, they devote 11 paragraphs to ways to make the service ‘appropriate’ to those of other faiths.²⁶⁷ Not surprisingly, this was one part of the Report that would receive significant criticism during the Debate in General Synod, calling it a ‘compromise’.²⁶⁸ Even the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, warned of other faiths objecting with ‘real anger’, to ‘watered-down theological truths in the hope that the lowest common denominator will make the whole event acceptable.’²⁶⁹ Perhaps if there had been a clearer understanding of the relationship between liturgy and theology in the Church of England, and the Church of England’s theology as Practical Theology, the authors might have been able to draw out the theological implications from this vitally important and distinctively Anglican *practical* starting point. For example, what is it saying to other faiths about the necessary exclusivity of Christianity when they may not come to the communion rail and what might have been the theological impact of inviting them to come and receive a blessing?

The final three chapters of the Report move on to consider multi-faith worship and the practical issues around it. In looking at *why* such a service might be held, the Report makes the distinction between National and Civic services (the ‘Observance’ for Commonwealth Day, the multi-faith mayoral service in Bedford or the response in Bradford to the fire at the City Football Ground in May 1985), services for an already established multi-faith community (for example a charitable organisation, or perhaps

²⁶⁶ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter V, para. 91, p.39.

²⁶⁷ This is the word used in the text of the Report. See *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), p.39.

²⁶⁸ *RP 7/92 23/2*, The Revd Tony Higon (*Chelmsford*), p.344.

²⁶⁹ *RP 7/92 23/2*, The Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr George Carey), p.399.

those who have come together through a Conference) and finally, services for particular concerns ('for the imposition of sanctions in South Africa', or 'for unilateral disarmament'), which the Report cautions against as being 'problematical'.²⁷⁰ When raising the issue of *who* should take part, the authors simply put the question of mainstream denominations of a religion, rather than breakaway groups. For this reason they leave open the question of whether or not it would be acceptable to invite members of New Religious Movements.²⁷¹

The uniqueness of the Church of England's position with regard to multi-faith worship is addressed in the final section of this chapter, on *where* the service will take place.

The Church of England has a large number of buildings, many of them bigger than others which might be available, but it is also because of the national position of the Church of England that many feel it is appropriate to hold services designed for the whole community in what is still often one of the community's focal points. By making its building available, the Church is showing hospitality and giving a welcome to people of other faiths.²⁷²

However, if the service is to be held in an Anglican Church, it will have to comply with the requirements of Canon Law, and it is for this reason that the Report's concluding chapter looks at this area.²⁷³ For all the discussion earlier about the inclusion of material from the Scriptures of other faiths, worship in an Anglican Church must comply with authorised forms of service. Where no provisions are made for the kind of service required, Canon B5 permits the priest or minister to 'use forms of service considered suitable by him for those occasions'. However, these forms of service must be authorised by the Bishop and he must be satisfied that 'in words and

²⁷⁰ See *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter VI, and for treatment of this last question, paras 110–114, pp.45–46. 'Whenever a service is held in support of a political cause the minister has to consider whether the Church would be seen to be taking sides, but this is particularly true in the case of "multi-faith services".' p.45.

²⁷¹ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter VI, paras 115, 116, p.46.

²⁷² *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter VI, para. 118, p.47.

²⁷³ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter IX, pp.57–59.

order (the forms of service) are reverent and seemly and are neither contrary to, nor indicative of any departure from, the Doctrine of the Church of England in any essential matter.²⁷⁴ These Canons apply to Cathedral Churches as well as to parish churches. Of course, the matter which this thesis is addressing is whether the Church of England has a distinctive Theology or Doctrine of Religious Pluralism. At this stage it is not entirely clear what the Doctrine of the Church of England *is* on the subject of other faiths; and the eventual decision of the General Synod to ask the IFCG to produce a set of Guidelines for multi-faith worship demonstrates the lack of theological clarity for those Bishops who would need to authorise *ad hoc* orders of service. The question that is raised by this is whether Practical Theology is simply the pastoral application of Doctrine in its complexity but not the changing of Doctrine. Here I suggest that Practical Theology is indeed the pastoral application of Doctrine but it can also help to interpret Doctrine, or shed new light on it. An example which seems to illustrate the point is the work done by theologians on the impassibility of God, as a result of the Holocaust.²⁷⁵ In doing this there needs to be informed and systematic theological reflection on how the Doctrine is affected by the *experience* of the Church, in this case with practical issues of Religious Pluralism.

So, is the question of whether or not to take part in multi-faith worship a matter of Doctrine, or simply a practice subsequent to Doctrine? In the Report, *Multi-Faith*

²⁷⁴ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter IX, para. 164, p.57.

²⁷⁵ The interest in this subject can be traced to Jürgen Moltmann's book of 1973, *The Crucified God*. First published in the English translation by SCM, London, 1974. He was the first to raise the question of whether God suffered with God's creation or was impassible. Since then, several theologians have returned to the classical doctrine of impassibility and while not wishing to change it, have nevertheless called for a 're-expression' of it, to take into account the fact that suffering today is regarded as psychological, emotional and spiritual as much as physical. See Creel, R. E., *Divine Impassibility: an Essay in Philosophical Theology* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986), especially pp.150ff for a discussion of the impact of the Holocaust and also Helm, P., 'The Impossibility of Divine Passibility', in Cameron, N. B., (ed.) *The Power and Weakness of God* (Rutherford House, Edinburgh, 1990), pp.178ff.

Worship, the authors correct the view that the requirements of Canon Law can be avoided by referring to the services as ‘celebration’ or ‘observance’. Canon F16 requires that in the case of anything which takes place in a church must ‘befit the House of God, be consonant with sound doctrine and make for the edifying of the people.’²⁷⁶ This makes the link between liturgy and Doctrine which I believe is distinctive for Anglican Theology.²⁷⁷ Taking part in multi-faith worship is a matter of Doctrine. The theology which is part of the liturgy of that service will, eventually, start to make its impact felt in the interpretation of Doctrine; particularly the Doctrines of Christology, God, Mission and Salvation and the nature of the Church.

The two short chapters on ‘serial multi-faith services’ and ‘multi-faith services with an agreed common order’ both present an even-handed approach to the best way forward and the potential pitfalls. ‘These shared observances should include both a clear testimony to the saving work of God in Christ and sympathetic listening to the testimony of other faiths. Those present might not be praying together, but they would be praying in each other’s presence.’²⁷⁸ ‘Unless care is taken, each contribution can become a “showpiece” to be performed in front of other groups.’²⁷⁹ Obviously, if the service takes place in a church then there is the opportunity for the Christian community to take the lead in helping to create an agreed order of service; however, an extensive list of possible problems are raised and careful planning and evaluation encouraged. This is an important section of the book, because it makes clear that

²⁷⁶ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter IX, para. 165, p.58. In the case of services held elsewhere, it is the priest of the Church of England who is bound by the Declaration of Assent contained in Canon C15, by which they promise that ‘I will use only the forms of service which are authorised or allowed by Canons.’

²⁷⁷ Although in Chapter 1 I noted the fact that the link between liturgy and Doctrine is first and foremost a distinctive element of the Orthodox Church.

²⁷⁸ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter VII, para. 125, p.49.

²⁷⁹ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter VII, para. 127, p.50.

multi-faith worship is not something to be undertaken lightly and that there are considerable difficulties associated with it. Para. 131 concludes that ‘the ideal solution may be a multi-faith pilgrimage. Each community can offer its own brief act of worship in the context of its own place of worship, the congregation processing from place to place.’²⁸⁰

However, despite all the caveats and the careful practical advice, this Report was heavily criticised at the General Synod Debate, for being ‘one-sided’ and it is to this Debate that I now turn.²⁸¹

2.3.3 1992: The Debate

12th JULY 1992 3.55PM

MULTI-FAITH WORSHIP?: REPORT BY THE BOARD OF MISSION (GS

1011)²⁸²

²⁸⁰ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter VII, para. 131, p.50.

²⁸¹ The following format for Debates is taken directly from the Reports of Proceedings themselves. It is a format which I shall continue to use throughout this work for discussion of Debates in the General Synod. Although I acknowledge that Rev., the Rev. and Rev’d are widely used in church documents, the form used for clerical titles (for example, Revd) is also copied directly from the Reports of Proceedings.

²⁸² CHAIR *The Bishop of Portsmouth (Rt Revd Timothy Bavin)*
 SPEAKERS *The Bishop of Wolverhampton (Rt Revd Chris Mayfield) PROPOSER*
Mrs Dorothy Chatterly (Carlisle)
The Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr George Carey)
The Revd Tony Higon (Chelmsford) AMENDMENT
The Archdeacon of Leicester (Ven. David Silk)
Mrs Margaret Brown (Chichester) AMENDMENT
The Provost of Southwark (Very Revd David Edwards) AMENDMENT
Miss Vasantha Gnanadoss (Southwark)
The Bishop of Newcastle (Rt Revd Alec Graham)
Prebendary Dick Acworth (Bath and Wells)
Mr Ian Smith (York)
The Revd Gavin Reid (Guildford)
The Bishop of Ely (Rt Revd Stephen Sykes)
The Revd Graham Cray (York)
Mr Mark Birchall (Southall)
The Archdeacon of Craven (Ven. Brian Smith)
The Revd Peter Wheatley (London)
The Provost of Sheffield (Very Revd John Gladwin)

MOTION PROPOSED *The Bishop of Wolverhampton (Rt Revd Chris Mayfield)*

‘That this Synod:

- (a) Commend the report *Multi-Faith Worship?*²⁸³ for study in dioceses;
- (b) Ask the House of Bishops to consider what guidance should be given to clergy and laity faced with situations described in the report.

AMENDMENT (REJECTED) *Revd Tony Higon (Chelmsford)*

‘In line 1, after “Synod” insert “whilst noting the inadequacy of the Biblical material in the report and the widespread disapproval of multi-faith worship expressed within the Church”.’

AMENDMENT (REJECTED) *Revd Tony Higon (Chelmsford)*

‘Delete all words in sub-paragraph (a) and the letter “(b)”.’

AMENDMENT (PASSED) *The Provost of Southwark (Very Revd David Edwards)*

‘After sub-paragraph (b) *insert* as a new sub-paragraph (b):

“encourage further attention to the theology of multi-faith questions in the coming years, even if a full consensus on such issues is never likely to be reached;”

And re-number sub-paragraph (b) as (c).’

AMENDMENT (REJECTED) *Mrs Margaret Brown (Chichester)*

‘At the end of sub-paragraph (b) of the original motion *add* “and report back to this Synod”.’

AMENDMENT (REJECTED) *Mrs Margaret Brown (Chichester)*

‘At end *insert* as a new sub-paragraph

Canon Michael Seward (London)

Mr Frank Knaggs (Newcastle)

The Archbishop of York (Dr John Habgood)

²⁸³ In the transcripts of the Reports of Proceedings and in the *Guidance on The Situations Which Arise*, the title of the Report has a question mark at the end. However, the published report does not have the question mark.

“whilst wishing to encourage friendly relations with people of different faiths, nevertheless deplore the use of church and cathedral buildings, which have been consecrated for Christian worship, for the rites, ceremonies, readings or corporate prayers of other religions, and request the Standing Committee to introduce legislation to prevent such use”.’

This is a list as it appears in the Reports of Proceedings of the motion proposed and the amendments proposed, and made, to the motion.²⁸⁴ I have included a list of all those who took part in the Debate and the order in which they spoke in the footnotes.

The overall feeling of the Debate was that this was a Report that was not critically assessing *whether* multi-faith worship was the right thing to do, but a Report that assumed that it *was* correct and wanted to offer justification for that and practical advice. A significant number of those in Synod did not yet agree that multi-faith worship was acceptable, chiefly because they could not yet agree that there was any other approach to those of other faiths than trying to convert them to Christianity.²⁸⁵ This is what Race identified as the traditional exclusivist position.

This Report is several steps ahead of the question of whether we should be converting those of other faiths or listening to each other, because it is looking into how Christianity and the other faiths can sit alongside each other and pray together and worship together. In his introductory speech to the General Synod, the Chairman of the IFCG, the Rt Revd Chris Mayfield, reminded people that ‘this is no abstract, theoretical issue; it is a real issue which presses on many cathedrals and parish

²⁸⁴ The wording of the motion as it was eventually passed follows at the end of this analysis.

²⁸⁵ See speeches made by Mrs Dorothy Chatterly, Revd Tony Higon and Mrs Margaret Brown, for example, *RP* 7/92 23/2, pp.337ff, 342ff, 348ff.

churches'; although, of course 'we are talking about occasional special events.'²⁸⁶ 'There is no question of multi-faith worship becoming the regular diet of Christian people.'²⁸⁷ The fact that multi-faith worship is something which the Church of England as National Church *has* to consider, means that this Report does look at ways in which exclusivists can 'proceed' (in other words, those most opposed to it).²⁸⁸ Whilst accepting that 'consensus was never likely to be reached', Mayfield believed that their biblical investigation had demonstrated that 'even a conservative understanding the Bible does not preclude some forms and occasions of multi-faith worship.' He went on:

Moreover, the Old Testament shows us in a number of places how God not only speaks to those outside his chosen people but also uses them to speak to those who are his chosen people and to enlarge their vision.²⁸⁹

However, the Revd Tony Higon of the House of Clergy who described himself as having a 'conservative understanding of the Bible' did not agree.²⁹⁰ He felt that it was not honest to present a Report which omitted any Bible passages 'which have negative implications about multi-faith worship'.²⁹¹ More than this, he believed that none of the biblical passages used by the authors of the Report:

... actually commends multi-faith worship, yet they are quoted in a report on the subject in such a way as to give the impression that they do. Many passages that the report quotes to give support to multi-faith worship are interpreted in such a way which is illegitimate.²⁹²

²⁸⁶ RP 7/92 23/2, The Rt Revd Christopher Mayfield (Bishop of Wolverhampton), p.335.

²⁸⁷ RP 7/92 23/2, The Rt Revd Christopher Mayfield (Bishop of Wolverhampton), p.335.

²⁸⁸ *Multi-Faith Worship* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992), Chapter III, para. 32, p.19.

²⁸⁹ RP 7/92 23/2, p.335. The Archbishop of Canterbury makes the point that in his experience 'I do not find people of other faiths clamouring to engage in multi-faith worship.' (*ibid* p.341).

²⁹⁰ RP 7/72 23/2, The Revd Tony Higon (*Chelmsford*), p.342. He refers particularly to 1 John 2:22–23, 2 John 7–9, Isaiah 45:4–5, Galatians 1:8–9.

²⁹¹ RP 7/92 23/2, The Revd Tony Higon (*Chelmsford*), p.342.

²⁹² RP 7/92 23/2, The Revd Tony Higon (*Chelmsford*), p.343.

Higton then proceeds to give a detailed exposition of the various Bible passages used by the Report. His argument is that whether or not one supports multi-faith worship for 'pastoral reasons' one should not claim that it has Scriptural support when it does not.²⁹³

I have already noted that the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke at this General Synod Debate, and he did so because he knew that although this Report was about multi-faith worship, it had been written because of a background of very strong feelings about that subject. So, he said 'this debate and the way we conduct it will be taken as the touchstone of the Church of England's attitude to other faiths communities in our country.'²⁹⁴ For that reason, he offered his own understanding of 'authentic Christian stance in inter-faith relationship' and he based it on 'four key factors: generosity, surprise, challenge and integrity'.²⁹⁵ However, what Dr. Carey in fact went on to do, was to use this framework of four words as a means of criticising the Report, particularly for its lack of theology:

For me and, I think, many here [a firm base in Christian theology] means the finality of Christ in terms of God's revelation is pivotal and definitive. I wonder if there really can be common worship together if the content of faith is not agreed and shared. I really do have doubts that such a thing is possible without there being major qualifications about the very nature of worship itself.

I fully appreciate that in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society the nature of a civic service will have to be reviewed, for it is inevitable that representatives of different faiths will attend certain public services, and the Church of England's position as a national Church will make it often a natural host. On such occasions it is self-evident that sensitivity must guide the preparation of the liturgy and the sermon, especially if a large

²⁹³ *RP 7/92 23/2*, The Revd Tony Higton (*Chelmsford*), p.344.

²⁹⁴ *RP 7/92 23/2*, The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, p.339.

²⁹⁵ *RP 7/92 23/2*, The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, p.339.

number of people present are going to be from other faith communities. However, I am sure that a single tradition of faith should determine the character of the service. This preserves everyone's integrity.²⁹⁶

There are several elements of this speech which help to identify the Archbishop within Race's three-fold paradigm. In talking about the Revelation of Christ as 'final' and 'definitive', he makes it clear that he does not believe that there is a means of grace outside Christ. But, once again, the Church of England as the National, Established Church means that this is an hospitable exclusivism which must be characterised by 'sensitivity', to use Carey's word. Only in a truly democratic ecclesial body would it be possible for the most senior Bishop to make comments like this, for the Debate to continue and ultimately for the General Synod to pass a Report with which he did not agree.²⁹⁷ This shows that even the Archbishop of Canterbury is part of a process of 'mutual correction'. This is a term which I have taken from the IFCG Report on mixed-faith marriage and which I will develop throughout this thesis. It is not developed as a concept by the IFCG, but my understanding of it in this thesis is that it is a process defined by the Synodical (Parliamentarian) system of Church governance and is, therefore, an essential element of the methodology of Anglican Theology. As I have already suggested, this is exemplified not only in General Synod, where the different traditions are given voice in turn in the Debating Chamber, but also in the intentional representation of these traditions on the Commissions who write the Reports for Synod.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ *RP 7/92 23/2*, The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, p.341.

²⁹⁷ The Archbishop did not argue against the Report, but he did argue for an amendment to be passed which had been tabled by the Revd David Edwards, Provost of Southwark: 'After sub-paragraph (a) *insert* as a new sub-paragraph (b): "encourage further attention to the theology of multi-faith questions in the coming years, even if a full consensus on such issues is never likely to be reached;" and re-number sub-paragraph (b) as (c).' This amendment was indeed passed.

²⁹⁸ Chapter 2, p.103.

The Provost of Southwark, the Very Revd David Edwards, whose amendment the Archbishop supported, identified himself as an inclusivist and felt strongly that ‘the position called “pluralism” in the Report is difficult to describe as a Christian position, and perhaps the Report has been too liberal in that direction.’²⁹⁹ This picks up the point I made earlier about pluralism and it is interesting to note that Edwards’ comment went unchallenged in the Debate. His main question, however, was directed at Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali’s position in the report, that ‘Jesus Christ’s revelation of God is full and final’:

Is that right? The New Testament does not contain full or final revelation. Indeed it itself teaches that a full revelation will be the continuing work of the Holy Spirit and will be complete only when the story of humanity is complete.³⁰⁰

After this, the Chairman of the Doctrine Commission, the Rt Revd Alec Graham, Bishop of Newcastle, spoke in favour of the Report (although he admitted that some of the theological sections read ‘decidedly oddly’ and that he personally would have worded parts of it ‘a bit differently.’)³⁰¹

I cannot see that it is disrespectful to the God who is both Creator and Saviour if Christian churches are used as places where people (all children, we believe, of the heavenly Father) meet to

²⁹⁹ *RP 7/92 23/2*, The Very Revd David Edwards (The Provost of Southwark), p.351.

³⁰⁰ *RP 7/92 23/2*, The Very Revd David Edwards (The Provost of Southwark), p.351. Michael Nazir-Ali himself did not speak in this Debate but was a member of the IFCG and wrote significant sections of the Report. He was born in Pakistan and educated at Karachi University, before coming to Ridley Hall, Cambridge for his ministerial training. His father converted from Islam. After being priested in 1976 he undertook further postgraduate studies at Cambridge, Oxford and Harvard and he holds a number of doctorates. He worked as a priest in Karachi and Lahore and became Bishop of Raiwind in West Punjab in 1984. He was given refuge in England by the Archbishop of Canterbury when his life was endangered in Pakistan. He became an assistant to the Archbishop and became Co-ordinator of Studies and Education for the Lambeth Conference 1988. He was General Secretary of the CMS and assistant Bishop of Southwark from 1989–1994, Bishop of Rochester from 1994 and Chairman of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority’s ethics and law committee until 2003. He joined the IFCG in 1990 to work on the Report *Multi-Faith Worship* and was part of it in 1995 for the Report *Communities and Buildings*. He has published almost exclusively on the subject of Religious Pluralism and his titles include: *Islam, A Christian Perspective* (Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1983), *Frontiers in Christian–Muslim Encounters* (1987), *From Everywhere to Everywhere: A World View of Christian Mission* (1990), *Mission and Dialogue* (1995), *Conviction and Conflict: Islam Christianity and World Order* (2005), *The Unique and Universal Christ* (Continuum, London, 2008).

³⁰¹ *RP 7/92 23/2*, The Rt Revd Alec Graham (*Bishop of Newcastle*), p.353.

express their honour and respect for one another and for their respective traditions and religions. Put more positively: for us to concentrate on and to build on truths associated with God as Creator does not necessarily involve us denying or compromising our faith in God as Saviour.³⁰²

Perhaps it demonstrates the importance of this Debate that the Archbishop of York (Dr John Habgood) also spoke. The Archbishops of York and Canterbury are the two most senior bishops of the Church of England. Habgood had been part of a service in Canterbury Cathedral which had attracted a great deal of media attention when a group of Christians ambushed the service and began denouncing it from the pulpit. The service had come about at the end of a pilgrimage from the University of Kent (where Dr Habgood had been lecturing on the environment to a multi-faith group), to the Cathedral.³⁰³ There, he had tried to lead a service of psalms, sermon and prayers when the service was interrupted.

The question I want to leave with the Synod is: where do we find the witness for Christ in that kind of behaviour? Do we not find Christ in the generosity which is prepared to receive people rather than in the invective hurled at those with whom one disagrees?³⁰⁴

By now, the heat was rising in the Debate. Canon Michael Saward from the Diocese of London, was the next to speak:

I am sure that I speak on behalf of anybody of whatever view in deploring the regrettable circumstances that the Archbishop of York has just described. That kind of intolerance is unforgiveable, from whatever source it comes. I would add, however, that the same sort of intolerance was expressed, when the Open Letter was published, by one anonymous Bishop who called the authors 'racists'.³⁰⁵

³⁰² *RP* 7/92 23/2, The Rt Revd Alec Graham (*Bishop of Newcastle*), p.354.

³⁰³ See the report of this in the *Independent*, 13 July, 1992.

³⁰⁴ *RP* 7/92 23/2, The Archbishop of York, Dr John Habgood, pp.368–369.

³⁰⁵ *RP* 7/92 23/2, Canon Michael Saward (*London*), p.369.

The Chairman of the IFCG noted the tension within the Synod and made the point that ‘there is not a polarity between the credibility of evangelism on the one hand and this exploration of a deeper encounter in Dialogue.’³⁰⁶ For this reason, he was also happy to support David Edwards’ amendment which called for further theological study of multi-faith questions. The amendment was put and carried.³⁰⁷

But that was not the end of the Debate. Mrs Margaret Brown now put forward an amendment, which would insert the following as a new sub-paragraph:

[That this Synod]

“whilst wishing to encourage friendly relations with people of different faiths, nevertheless deplore the use of church and cathedral buildings, which have been consecrated for Christian worship, for the rites, ceremonies, readings or corporate prayers of other religions, and request the Standing Committee to introduce legislation to prevent such use.”³⁰⁸

Several people spoke in favour of the amendment, (including those who ‘hardly ever agree with Mrs Brown’s attitudes or the points that she makes’),³⁰⁹ but when it was put to the vote, it was defeated by a show of hands.

So, finally, a motion for closure was put to the Chairman, who accepted and called upon Mayfield to sum up before the final vote on the (amended) motion. He did so by acknowledging the difficulty of the subject matter but stated that the Report was ‘a position paper which indicates where we have got to at this stage’ and, later, ‘a

³⁰⁶ *RP 7/92 23/2*, The Rt Revd Christopher Mayfield (*Bishop of Wolverhampton*), p.364.

³⁰⁷ AMENDMENT (PASSED) *The Provost of Southwark (Very Revd David Edwards)*

‘After sub-paragraph (b) *insert* as a new sub-paragraph (b):

“encourage further attention to the theology of multi-faith questions in the coming years, even if a full consensus on such issues is never likely to be reached;”

And re-number sub-paragraph (b) as (c).’

³⁰⁸ *RP 7/92 23/2*, Mrs Margaret Brown (*Chichester*), p.367.

³⁰⁹ *RP 7/92 23/2*, Canon Michael Saward (*London*), p.370.

contribution to the debate.’³¹⁰ After answering as many of the key points in the opposition’s speeches as he could, he finished by pointing to a direction that would become tremendously important in the years that followed:³¹¹

We need a more Christo-centric perspective, not less. The alternative is not a theo-centric position claimed by John Hick and Keith Ward ... what we probably need is a Trinitarian perspective which allows us to understand God as Father of all Creation, which allows us to see the Son who in Jesus comes among us in saving love at Calvary and which reminds us of the sustaining, renewing life of the Holy Spirit, leading us surprisingly and in unexpected directions. I would hope that rather than living a defensive Christianity, a fortress Christianity, we can allow ourselves to be open to the freeing work of the Holy Spirit, and that such an encounter with people of other faiths will allow us to recognise that God has created and sustained all people, that Jesus Christ has revealed to us the saving will of God and in the Holy Spirit seeks to reconcile what is broken and divided.³¹²

With these words, it is fair to say that the Debate in General Synod offers a better quality of theology in its discussions than the Report had been able to do. There is no doubt that the Report suffered from not having any kind of consensus among the Committee. While it was strong on practicalities, on information about places of worship and on putting the whole Debate into the context of history, Higon had highlighted some of the shortcomings of the Biblical section and both Edwards and the Archbishop of Canterbury had pointed out the lack of theology behind it. The fact that the motion was amended to include further theological study demonstrates one of the great strengths of the process of passing a Report through General Synod. If the

³¹⁰ RP 7/92 23/2, The Rt Revd Christopher Mayfield (*Bishop of Wolverhampton*), p.357.

³¹¹ D’Costa, G *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* (Orbis, New York, 2000). In particular, see Part II, pp.99–173. The consideration of the role of the Trinity in the theology of religions had already been hinted at in the book which D’Costa had edited in response to John Hick’s *Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, especially the chapter by Rowan Williams, ‘Trinity and Pluralism’. D’Costa, G., *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* (Orbis, New York, 1990), pp.3–15.

³¹² RP 7/92 23/2, The Rt Revd Christopher Mayfield (*Bishop of Wolverhampton*), p.358.

Report itself cannot be regarded as an example of theology of ‘mutual correction’,³¹³ then surely the process of passing the Report and looking forward to the Guidelines can be seen as such.³¹⁴

2.3.4 The Conclusion of the 1992 Debate

MOTION PASSED *The Bishop of Wolverhampton (Rt Revd Chris Mayfield)*

‘That this Synod:

- (a) Commend the report *Multi-Faith Worship?* for study in dioceses;
- (b) Encourage further attention to the theology of multi-faith questions in the coming years, even if a full consensus on such issues is never likely to be reached;
- (c) Ask the House of Bishops to consider what guidance should be given to clergy and laity faced with situations described in the report.’

2.3.5 1993: The Guidelines

In 1993 Mayfield presented to the House of Bishops, the paper *Multi-Faith Worship? Guidance on the Situations Which Arise*. This was in response to part (c) of the motion passed by General Synod.³¹⁵

The 1992 Report on which the Guidelines are based was an attempt to contribute to the continuing Debate about Religious Pluralism, and if the length of the General Synod Debate which it generated is an indication, then it achieved its purpose.

³¹³ And with the wide range of theological positions on the Committee, it certainly had the potential to be; but was unable to fulfil this potential.

³¹⁴ Having made reference twice already to the work produced by the Second Vatican Council, it should be noted that the material produced at the Council also relied on votes, whilst allowing for a veto – in principle – from the Pope. So, in theory, one could argue that this theology of mutual correction is present in other ecclesial forms. However, my argument is that the history of the Church of England (Established, both Catholic and Reformed.), its theology since its inception (Hooker’s *Via Media*) and its present Synodical structures make it a theology which actually characterises the Church of England.

³¹⁵ *Multi-Faith Worship? Guidance on the Situations Which Arise*. (GC Misc. 411).

However, it was – in itself – offering a clear message that multi-faith worship was acceptable and to be encouraged within certain parameters. In commending the Report, the General Synod agreed with this, but it sought clarity on what those parameters should be. The Guidelines are brief and they refer back to the Report with every subheading; so, is there any evidence that they have taken the polarities of the Synod Debate into account? The answer is that they have and these Guidelines now stand as evidence of the beneficial outcome of what can be achieved by a theology of mutual correction. A theology moreover, that is strongly motivated by practical concerns: a Practical Theology. The questions they pose are sharp and clear:

it is vital that the organisers and principal participants ... are clear in their own minds about what they expect to happen and why they might want to be involved. It is even better if they are able to articulate about these things to the media and to their actual and potential critics.³¹⁶

Throughout the booklet, it is made clear that the difficulties which arise in undertaking multi-faith worship are numerous and that such services should never be undertaken lightly. The theological and spiritual complexities of something as seemingly innocuous as multi-faith worship are now made explicit with a careful list of questions for consideration, for any organisers (and their Bishops, who must give final approval). This is highlighted in a new section entitled ‘What will be the pastoral and spiritual impact of the event?’ (referring to sections in the Report called ‘Principles’ and ‘Planning and Evaluation’). This is much more sensitive to the impact that these services have on the communities involved as well as the wider communities of Christians around them (and in a global and media age, on the national and international communities as well). This was a concern first raised in the 1966 Debate:

³¹⁶ *Multi-Faith Worship? Guidance on the Situations Which Arise* (not published.), para. 1, p.1.

the symbolic impact of such an event for those of no religion and the detrimental effect on Mission to these people.

The final section of the booklet is also a new title, 'A question of judgement'; and an echo of the impact of the Debate is heard in the final sentence of the last paragraph:

In the end this will be a matter of judgement, or more precisely, a question of discerning the ways of the Spirit. We must be open to the Spirit, who often works in surprising ways. This does not mean that anything is possible. Christians do not want to engage in idolatry, or deny Christ. The theological principle must be 'an open-hearted loyalty to Jesus Christ which honours both his uniqueness and his universality'.³¹⁷

In the final sentence of this quotation there are clear overtones of Race's category of inclusivism, which seeks to affirm both the *solus Christus* principle and the universal will of God to save all. However, perhaps picking up the emphasis of the 1992 Report, there is reference here only to *Christ's* universality. This of course highlights the dangers of trying to read too much theologically into mere sentences of a brief Report. Yet it may also be evidence of what I will identify as the 'exclusivist-inclusivist' perspective of the Church of England. The interesting question is whether the belief in the universality of Christ can develop into a universality of his grace in history and society, and it is to this – and other questions of clarification of how to define exclusivist-inclusivism – that I shall continue to highlight in the work which follows. These Guidelines were approved by the House of Bishops and remain as a well-used and important resource for interfaith Advisers and Bishops alike.³¹⁸ The fact that this issue has not been raised as a specific issue in Synod since 1992³¹⁹ and that the Guidelines provided enough help for those planning the celebrations for the

³¹⁷ *Multi-Faith Worship? Guidance on the Situations Which Arise* (not published.), para. 7, p.7.

³¹⁸ Email exchange with Hugh Boulter, Chairman of the Oxford Council for Inter-faith Concerns (ODCIC).

³¹⁹ At least at time of writing, 2010.

Millennium in 2000, shows how definitive they have proved to be. The Debate which surrounded this issue was heated. However, in the end, the Guidelines both provided a corrective to the pluralism which had been evident in some of the services and also permitted what might be termed a cautious inclusivism.

2.4 Conclusion

My intention in this Chapter has been to demonstrate that the process of producing these Guidelines, from the first Debate of 1966, until the finished result of 1993, was one which illustrates the Church of England's method of doing theology. In detailing the process of the Debates and analysing the Reports, I hope I have shown that there is such a thing as a distinctively Anglican Theology. It is a Practical Theology because, as the discussions about multi-faith worship show, it arises out of the experience of being the Established Church. In this case, it is the experience of the people of England (including those of other faiths) who want to mourn together, remember together, celebrate together or just mark moments of significant transition in the life of the community. Still today, when an event occurs in England which touches the national psyche, it is the Church of England vicar who is the first spokesperson for the local community.³²⁰ The fact of Establishment means that the Church of England is characterised by an imperative of hospitality and unity. I have argued that this imperative was recognised by Cranmer (as the Office and Collects of the Book of Common Prayer testify to) and endorsed by Elizabeth I in the final editing of the

³²⁰ For example, after the Cumbrian shootings in England July 2010 and the hunt for Raoul Moat. For a collection of excellent theological reflections on this by a group of Church of England priests who met at Littlemore, Oxford in 2005 and call themselves the Littlemore Group, see Wells, S., and Coakley, S., (eds) *Praying for England: Priestly Presence in Contemporary Culture* (Continuum, London, 2008), particularly Chapters 1 and 4, 'Representation' by Stephen Curry, pp.21–40 and 'Presence' by Edmund Newey, pp.85–106.

Thirty-Nine Articles.³²¹ Now, in the twentieth century, it was still a vitally important part of a discussion which since 1945 included parishioners of other faiths. With the help of a committee of experts in the IFCG, the discussion about multi-faith worship in 1992 was intelligent and informed. However, it is possible to see two different elements in the Report: on the one hand this was about civic responsibility and hospitality and on the other it was about encouraging Christians to get to know people of other faiths. There had been concern that the English appetite for fair play and tolerance was leading the Church of England to create syncretistic worship (so, the Revd E. G. Stride in his opening speech in 1966); worship which neither demonstrated the heart of the Christian faith nor allowed other faiths to worship according to their tradition. This seemed to correspond with what was happening in theological circles in the 1960s: the desire to be culturally relevant and to search for a global meta-narrative. These are also characteristics of what Race identified as ‘pluralism’ and which developed from within the Liberal tradition. I have shown that there were those within the Church of England who were concerned with the Dialogue with analytic philosophy, who when they turned to consider matters of Religious Pluralism could be described as pluralists, although when the IFCG Report included the pluralist type in 1992, one senior clergyman in the Debate questioned whether it was a position that anyone held in the Church of England. My intention is to trace this question through the material which follows, but from the material which covers multi-faith worship, early conclusions seem to point to an exclusivist–inclusivist position. In itself this position represents the inherent tension that the Church of England is constantly trying to hold together and it is this method of mutual correction which traces its history back to the sixteenth century and Hooker’s *Via Media*.

³²¹ Chapter 1, p.25.

If the first evidence of disquiet over ‘other religions’ came as a result of liturgical concerns, the next time a matter of Religious Pluralism reached the attention of the National Church was in 1972, with a request concerning the parish church itself; a request from the Muslim community in Wakefield, Yorkshire. It is to that church building that we now turn.

CHAPTER 3

Redundant Church Buildings

In this, the longest chapter of the thesis, I will be examining as case studies the Debates and Reports which concern the question of how the Church of England should dispose of church buildings it no longer needs.³²² The reason this becomes an issue of Religious Pluralism is that in 1972 a Muslim community in Wakefield offered to buy a redundant church so that they could use it as a mosque. I will continue to trace the threads of the argument I have outlined using Race's three-fold paradigm to analyse the Reports and speeches of the Debates and to see if there is any further evidence to back up the idea of exclusivist-inclusivism which I raised in Chapter 2. The Theology of Religious Pluralism is concerned with Christology, the Doctrine of God, Mission and Salvation and the Nature of the Church. However, the question of redundant church buildings sees the Church of England particularly concerned with Mission and Salvation.

3.1 A Question from Wakefield

The Synodical process in the Church of England works from the meeting of the Parochial Church Council, through the Deanery Synod, to the Diocesan Synod and finally to the General Synod. In 1972, the Bishop of Wakefield (Rt Revd E. Treacy), from the Diocese of Wakefield in Yorkshire, tabled a 'take note' Debate,³²³ on the principle of the use of redundant church buildings, for the General Synod to consider;

³²² The reason for the length of this chapter is that members of General Synod were of a divided mind about the use and disposal of redundant church buildings for 24 years and there is therefore more primary source material for this question than for any other.

³²³ A 'take note' Debate is one which takes note of, for example, a draft or outline proposals, or in this case, a Resolution passed by a Diocesan Synod. The only decision made is that the General Synod takes note of the Report, Guidelines, Resolution. It is a good mechanism for airing something in Synod without making it policy.

the Diocese having already debated it at length in their own Synod and been unable to reach a conclusion:

MOTION PROPOSED *The Bishop of Wakefield (Rt Revd E. Treacy)*

‘That the General Synod take note of the following resolution passed by the Wakefield Diocesan Synod:

“In view of the widespread interest and concern raised by the question of the future use of St. Mary's Church, Savile Town, Dewsbury, this Synod requests that the General Synod debate the principle of the use of consecrated buildings which have been declared redundant”.³²⁴

This question had arisen from the fierce debate in Dewsbury, Yorkshire, where the Muslim community had approached the Diocese of Wakefield, requesting permission to buy St Mary's Church in Savile Town, which had been declared redundant.

3.2 The Debates

There are five Debates from General Synod which consider the use by, and disposal of redundant church buildings to other faith communities: July 1972, February 1973, July 1973, February 1983 and July 1996.

3.3 The Debates of the 1970s

The three Debates of 1972, February 1973 and July 1973 are all closely linked.

3.3.1 The Background to the Debates

In 1971 a Working Party was set up by the BCC with the following terms of reference:

³²⁴ *RP 7/72 3/3*, p.442.

To seek evidence of the policies and practices of Churches, both centrally and locally, in regard to making church properties in multi-racial areas available for community activities (including policies and practices relating to the disposal of redundant property) and to report to the Board of the Community and Race Relations Unit with the view to the issue of an advisory publication.³²⁵

In September 1972 the Working Party completed an interim Report, *The Use of Church Properties for Community Activities in Multi-Racial Area*, which was followed by their final Report, *The Community Orientation of the Church*, in 1974.³²⁶

The Debate tabled in the Church of England's General Synod saw the matter raised in July 1972, just before the publication of the BCC Report. A member of the House of Laity (Miss J. M. Henderson), aware of the imminent publication of the BCC Working Party's Interim Report, added an amendment to the motion, which would instruct:

the Standing Committee to bring this matter before the Synod for further consideration when the Report of the Working Party set up by the Community and Race Relations Unit of the British Council of Churches is available,³²⁷ and instructs the Board for Mission and Unity to ascertain the views of the Missionary Societies.

Thus it was that in 1973, a Working Group of General Synod would produce the *Memorandum of Comment* (given the General Synod catalogue number GS 135)³²⁸ on the BCC Interim Report, *The Use of Church Properties for Community Activities in*

³²⁵ See *Communities and Buildings: Church of England Premises and Other Faiths* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), p.6.

³²⁶ 'The Working Party also engaged the services of a sociologist, Ann Holmes, "to direct surveys designed to produce evidence relevant to our task" in Bradford, Derby and the London borough of Lambeth. Her research was published in a separate document entitled *Church, Property and People* (BCC, 1973) but arrived too late to receive proper consideration in the final report.' (*Communities and Buildings* p.6).

³²⁷ *The Use of Church Properties for Community Activities in Multi-Racial Areas* (Church House Publishing, London, 1973).

³²⁸ This cataloguing system is used for all reports and papers which come before the General Synod. Occasional papers, or those from outside the Church of England (e.g. the British Council of Churches) are given the prefix 'Misc', for 'Miscellaneous'. Full copies of all reports and papers can be found at the Church of England Record Centre, Bermondsey, London.

Multi-Racial Areas. The final document which I want to consider from this time was the *Supplementary Report* by the Standing Committee of the General Synod, *The Use of Church Property* (GS 135A). This was a two-page document, which was produced after a fractious Debate in February 1973 (the outcome of which was to pass two motions that contradicted each other).³²⁹ The *Supplementary Report* drafted an amendment which hoped to clarify the terms of Debate in the July Group of Sessions.³³⁰

3.3.2 Analysis of Debates and Reports

8th JULY 1972 5pm

USE OF REDUNDANT CHURCHES³³¹

MOTION PROPOSED

The Bishop of Wakefield (Rt Revd E. Treacy)

³²⁹ See analysis of this Debate on page 175 for wording of the two motions.

³³⁰ The General Synod (called the *Church Assembly* until 1970), met for three Groups of Sessions a year (February, July and November) until 1994. Since then, Synod has met twice a year in July and November, with the provision for a third session to be held when necessary.

³³¹

CHAIR *Mr W. W. Campbell (Newcastle)*

SPEAKERS *The Bishop of Wakefield (Rt Revd E. Treacy) PROPOSER*
 Mr G. Fisher (Wakefield) SECONDER
 Prof. J. N. D. Anderson (London)
 Mr I. Bulmer-Thomas, (Chairman, Redundant Churches Fund) (London)
 The Dean of Norwich (Very Revd A. B. Webster)
 The Revd I. Smith-Cameron (London)
 The Revd Dr G. F. Cope (Other Universities: Province of Canterbury)
 Miss J. M. Henderson (Guildford) AMENDMENT
 The Earl of March, Chairman, BMU (Chichester)
 Mr J. W. M. Bullimore (Wakefield)
 Sir Ronald Harris, (First Church Estates Commissioner)
 Mr J. F. M. Smallwood (Southwark)
 The Revd H. W. F. Bishop, Chairman, Race Relations Unit, BCC – (Religious Communities – Province of York)
 Mr B. J. Stanley (Portsmouth)
 Canon G. O. Morgan (Manchester) POINT OF ORDER
 The Archdeacon of Oxford (Ven. C. Witton-Davies)
 Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge University) AMENDMENT
 Mr O. W. H. Clark (Southwark) POINT OF ORDER
 The Bishop of Wakefield (Rt Revd E. Treacy)

‘That the General Synod take note of the following resolution passed by the Wakefield Diocesan Synod:³³²

“In view of the widespread interest and concern raised by the question of the future use of St. Mary's Church, Savile Town, Dewsbury, this Synod requests that the General Synod debate the principle of the use of consecrated buildings which have been declared redundant”.³³³

AMENDMENT PROPOSED

Miss J. M. Henderson (Guildford)

‘And instructs the Standing Committee to bring this matter before the Synod for further consideration when the Report of the Working Party set up by the Community and Race Relations Unit of the British Council of Churches is available,³³⁴ and instructs the Board for Mission and Unity to ascertain the views of the Missionary Societies’.

AMENDMENT PROPOSED

Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge University)

‘And in the meantime requests that the theological and sociological implications of this matter be referred to the Doctrinal Commission and the Board for Social responsibility’.

The Debate in July 1972 on the ‘*Use of Redundant Churches*’ was hailed by some as the opportunity both ‘to face the reality of the fact that we now have in Britain substantial minorities of members of other religions’ and ‘to face and answer the question of the relationship of Christianity to other faiths,’³³⁵ phrases which Alan Race echoed in the opening part of his 1983 book, *Christians and Religious Pluralism*.

³³² There are 43 Dioceses in the Church of England, each administered by a bishop. The decision-making body for these Dioceses is a local (Diocesan) Synod, made up of the bishop, the suffragan (now called the ‘area’) bishop, and an elected group of clergy and laity. Each diocese meets twice a year to consider local issues and recommendations of the General Synod. Each Diocese also elects members to sit on the General Synod, in one of the three Houses of Synod: Bishops, Clergy and Laity. The number of clergy and laity elected in each Diocese varies and is calculated according to the number of clergy in the Diocese and the numbers of parishioners on the electoral roll.

³³³ *RP 7/72 3/3*, p. 442.

³³⁴ *The Use of Church Properties for Community Activities in Multi-Racial Areas* (BCC/CHP, London, 1973).

³³⁵ *RP 7/72 3/3*, Miss J. M. Henderson (*Guildford*), p.455.

The topic was raised for debate by the Diocesan Synod of Wakefield, and Treacy proposed the motion with reference to the ‘very strong reactions’ and ‘deep distress’ of the people of his parishes, on an issue about which he had found it ‘terribly hard’ to make up his mind.³³⁶ Eventually, he had concluded, his obligation was to the people of the Parochial Church Council of Thornhill Lees, who were objecting to the redundant church of St Mary’s being sold to Muslims for use as a mosque. He said:

I am not going to desert these people in their hour of trial. I am convinced that there are other places for the mosque, and, furthermore, I think that there is an obligation upon the Dewsbury Corporation, which receives a substantial income in rates from the immigrant population, to provide them with premises suitable for use as a mosque.³³⁷

Treacy attempted to explain why ‘normally Christian people’ had ‘descended to all sorts of cunning and sometimes sheer distortion of the facts’, in a situation such as the one St Mary’s was now facing.³³⁸ He spoke of their ‘fear’ (‘of the ultimate taking over of the area by immigrants’), their ‘confusion’ (on the subject of consecration), their hopes (‘for a revival of Christianity’) and their passionate sense of local identity (‘those who would rather be reunited with the Methodists or Roman Catholics than with a neighbouring parish that was on the “other side” in the Wars of the Roses’).³³⁹ Although there was some evidence of a specialised knowledge of Islam,³⁴⁰ the majority of those in Synod, including the Chairman of the BMU,³⁴¹ felt ‘seriously

³³⁶ *RP 7/72 3/3*, Rt Revd E. Treacy (*Bishop of Wakefield*), pp.442–3.

³³⁷ *RP 7/72 3/3*, Rt Revd E. Treacy (*Bishop of Wakefield*), p.443.

³³⁸ *RP 7/72 3/3*, Rt Revd E. Treacy (*Bishop of Wakefield*), p.443.

³³⁹ *RP 7/72 3/3*, Rt Revd E. Treacy (*Bishop of Wakefield*), pp.443–4.

³⁴⁰ Mr I. Bulmer-Thomas called Islam ‘a high religion’ by virtue of the reverence Muslims give to Mary, ‘blessed mother of our Lord.’ He felt that ‘most of what Professor Anderson said does not really touch the heart of Islam.’ *RP 7/72 3/3*, p.449 Professor Anderson had been a missionary for eight years in Egypt with the Egypt General Mission and was currently in the position of Professor of Oriental Law at the University of London.

³⁴¹ The Earl of March.

uninformed' and 'in great confusion and indecision on this particular issue.'³⁴² It is important to note, at this early stage of the Debate, the tendency for members to use 'other faiths' interchangeably with 'Muslims'.

In his opening speech, in 1972, Treacy advocated the speedy 'demolition and sale of the site' lest 'the susceptibilities of local communities be too much offended by seeing them appropriated for secular uses or handed over to non-Christian bodies.'³⁴³ The idea was not followed up in this Debate, but reappeared in a controversial amendment in 1973.³⁴⁴ In this Debate, Professor J. Norman D. Anderson,³⁴⁵ who said he 'would far rather see the site sold for commercial use', made the point that:

... Muslims should be given full liberty to follow their own religion ... should be given facilities ...[and] of course Christians should support this ... but it is something that we should support with the central Government, local government and individuals who are in a position to supply those facilities.³⁴⁶

³⁴² *RP 7/72 3/3*, The Earl of March, p.457.

³⁴³ *RP 7/72 3/3*, The Rt Rev E. G. Treacy (*Bishop of Wakefield*), p.444.

³⁴⁴ Amendment proposed by *Mr V. Menon (Chelmsford)*

'Leave out all words after "declared redundant" in the second line and insert "and are of no historical or architectural merit should be demolished and the site sold in the open market if desired".' *RP 2/73*, p.225.

³⁴⁵ As mentioned in the Introduction, I intend to include brief biographies of all those members of Synod who also held academic positions, or contributed to the academic debate about Religious Pluralism with their work. Professor Sir J. Norman D. Anderson was the first Chairman of the House of Laity, from 1970 when the General Synod was established, to 1979. He took a law degree at Cambridge and then went to Egypt with the Nile Mission Press in Cairo before serving with the Egypt General Mission. He later studied Arabic at the American University in Cairo. He was commissioned into the Intelligence Corps in the Second World War, eventually becoming Political Secretary for Arab Affairs in the Foreign Office in London, advising on post-war developments in the Middle East and, in particular, 'shariah-friendly' legal systems in Muslim majority countries. He was a firm advocate of 'law' as a vehicle for race relations. He later lectured extensively on Islamic law and became Professor of Oriental Laws at the University of London. He was Director of the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies there from 1959–1976. He wrote and published several books on Christianity and comparative religion, but was best known for *A Lawyer among the Theologians* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1973), and *The Mystery of the Incarnation* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1978). At the time of this debate he was Chairman of the House of Laity of General Synod and Anglican delegate to the World Council of Churches. See *Archive GB 0102 PP MS 60 at the School of Oriental and African Studies* for further information.

³⁴⁶ *RP 2/73 3/3*, Prof. J. N. D. Anderson (*London*), p.225.

A member of the House of Laity later echoed the notion of the Established Church's links with local and central government when he referred to members of the Church of England as 'citizens':

We are not only citizens of the country; we are Christians; we are committed to a particular Gospel. It is not for us in that capacity to provide places of worship for those who do not agree with us.³⁴⁷

In this Debate, there were many practical issues which needed to be raised and weighed up. Members were anxious about the length of time a church could stand empty and become susceptible to vandals; they needed to establish where the responsibility lay for the 'speedy sale' (Diocese or Central Office?). There was the matter of selling a church in a 'seemly' manner, without 'great notices ... offering the church to the highest bidder.'³⁴⁸ All of these questions were debated with some heat and emotion, which leads me back to one of the central themes of my thesis: the Church of England's way of 'doing' theology is intimately bound up with a practical concern for its parishioners, most of whom, the Church of England being the Established Church, are not church members. This has already been highlighted in the multi-faith worship material and now we see the same concern in this question of redundant church buildings. So, I would argue that the questions raised by the sale of the site were actually questions of Practical Theology, with the sensibilities of the local community as a case study. Within this, there are the theological questions of Mission (can the Christian symbol that is a church become a symbol of anything other than the decline of Christianity if it used for secular purposes or for another faith's worship?) and of Holiness (can the presence of God be specially focused in a particular area?). As we take a closer look at the Debate now, I hope to show how an

³⁴⁷ *RP 7/72 3/3*, Mr J. W. M. Bullimore (*Wakefield*), p.458.

³⁴⁸ *RP 7/72 3/3*, Mr I. Bulmer-Thomas (*Chairman of the Redundant Churches Fund*), p.448.

apparently ‘practical’ issue raises important theological questions, which the members themselves identified during the Debate and, in the end, decided they needed to consider in more detail before arriving at that elusive ‘principle’ for the Church Commissioners.

An example of one member of the General Synod who began with his own experience and drew out of it a recognisable theological position, was the Revd I. Smith-Cameron, himself an Asian Christian, born in India.³⁴⁹ With reference to his own experience, he went on to outline the facts of ‘the pluralistic religious situation’ which was now the reality of Britain.³⁵⁰ While he admitted that ‘God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is not accepted by Muslims,’³⁵¹ he was nonetheless convinced that Christians and Muslims both related to the ‘numinous’:

Of course there is a sense of numinous about buildings, but is there not a sense of numinous about a Christian church which has been made into a mosque? Is there not still a sense of numinous there? Or, indeed, in the case of a mosque made into a Christian church there will still also be a sense of the numinous there. But ultimately it is the people of God; it is we who are consecrated; it is we who are God’s people ... We are a people of God, and our idolatry should not even be to the most glorious buildings.³⁵²

In his reference to the shared experience of the numinous, in worship and devotion, Smith-Cameron made it clear that his starting point was the common experience of

³⁴⁹ Ivor Smith-Cameron was born in Madras, South India in 1929, and grew up in the parish of St Matthias, Vepery. He attended the Madras Christian College and came to England to train at Mirfield as a priest. He was ordained to a curacy in the Diocese of Chichester. He moved to London after four years and became Chaplain to Imperial College where he pioneered a network of Eucharistic cells throughout the secular structures of the university departments and student residences. In 1972 he was the Diocesan Missioner for Southwark Diocese; a role he continued in for twenty years. His other appointments have included Chairmanship of the General Synod, Chairmanship (and founder) of the Association of Black Clergy, Chairmanship of the Refugee Arrivals Project, Canon of Southwark Cathedral (1972–1994) and Chaplain to the Queen (1995–1999). In 1998 he published *The Church of Many Colours* (All Saints, London, 1998).

³⁵⁰ RP 7/72 3/3, The Revd I. Smith-Cameron (*London*), p.452.

³⁵¹ RP 7/72 3/3, The Revd I. Smith-Cameron (*London*), p.452.

³⁵² RP 7/72 3/3, The Revd I. Smith-Cameron (*London*), p.453.

the human subject (although, at this stage, there is no mention of secularism as the common ‘enemy’ to the religions). This is the first sign in General Synod of an approach which had its roots in the 1960s’ theological revolution and which in later years, would gather momentum: an emphasis on individual experience (rather than on the external ‘absolutes’ of traditional Doctrine) and a concern for what is *shared* by the world faiths.³⁵³ The concept of shared humanity is one which later becomes important in the Theology of Religious Pluralism, as I hope I have identified in Chapter 1 and in Cragg’s comments in the 1966 Debate on multi-faith worship. In the context of a Debate about the use and disposal of redundant church buildings, there is evidence here of what might be termed a ‘low ecclesiology’, where ‘church’ does not mean the building, but the ‘People of God’. Of particular interest in the quotation above is the use of ‘a’ people of God: with the implication of more than one covenant, more than one Revelation. For Smith-Cameron, it is this sense of the ‘non-Christian’ as neighbour that is the basis for the act of charity: an act that must communicate to all who see and hear it the charity that is the essence of the Gospel:

We have an opportunity for carrying out an educational process in the meaning of the Gospel. We can teach people that God as the subject of our devotion, God as the subject of our worship is one and the same God.³⁵⁴

With his emphasis on God rather than Christ, Smith-Cameron echoes Hick’s theocentrism and certainly everything he says in this Debate would fit into the category of pluralism. As Smith-Cameron is a priest in the Church of England, it would seem that there is indeed evidence for the pluralist position in the Church of England. An extract

³⁵³ *RP* 7/72 3/3, The Revd I. Smith-Cameron (*London*), p.454. Adrian Hastings, in his *History of English Christianity* (SCM, London, 1986/2006) Part VI, suggests that this major shift in ecclesial preoccupation, from questions of Doctrine (which now needed to be ‘de-mythologized’) to the need for relevance in the face of increasing secularisation, can trace its popular roots to the book *Honest to God*, published in 1963 by the Anglican Bishop, John Robinson. Robinson, J., *Honest to God* (SCM, London, 1963)

³⁵⁴ *RP* 7/72 3/3, Prof. J.N.D. Anderson (*London*), p.452.

from another speech shows that there was, however, more than one understanding of the Doctrine of God in this Debate:

It may be said that Muslims genuinely worship the Creator God and there is only one Creator God, and so they are trying to worship the same God, though I would say, with respect, that they are worshipping a caricature, in some respects, of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.³⁵⁵

Smith-Cameron had emphasised the common object of devotion among all the religions. Professor Anderson, on the other hand, did not talk about what the religions have in common.³⁵⁶ With the weight of his learning and experience behind him, the Chairman of the House of Laity made a powerful speech which explained to Synod members exactly what the Qur'an says about Jesus. He argued that Muslims are *not* actually worshipping the same God as Christians: God has been revealed as Trinity, but Muslims worship 'the Creator God'. What they are worshipping is not the same God, but a 'caricature'. He acknowledges that God is 'at work in all religions', but:

Of course God is at work everywhere; of course all religions have good in them and all good ultimately comes from God; but if we take extreme examples – and, naturally, I am not referring to Islam here – we need to remind ourselves, I think, that St. Paul said that an idol in itself is nothing but that the sacrifices that the heathen offer are offered to demons and not to God.³⁵⁷

The question for this thesis is whether Anderson's identification of God 'at work in all religions' and 'good in all religions' is evidence of the inclusivist position of God's grace extending beyond ecclesiological structures and beyond *solus Christus*. Could it be seen as exclusive-inclusivism? At this point, it is worth reminding oneself again that all comments in the Debate so far had been made with reference to Muslims,

³⁵⁵ RP 7/72 3/3, Prof. J.N.D. Anderson (*London*), p.446.

³⁵⁶ Although he made it clear that he supported the 'Liberty that all people should have to follow their own religion.' RP 7/72 3/3 Prof. J. N. D. Anderson (*London*), p.446.

³⁵⁷ RP 7/72 3/3 Prof. J. N. D. Anderson (*London*), p.446.

monotheism and mosques (except for Anderson's mention here of un-named 'extreme examples').

For Anderson, the uniqueness of Christ lies in His atoning death and resurrection; a death that redeemed the world, reconciled God to humanity and thereby established a new covenant.³⁵⁸ Within a decade, Race, would turn the argument on its head by suggesting that the uniqueness of Christ was not, in fact, the essence of Christianity.³⁵⁹ (Indeed, in his espousal of the principle of 'charity', Smith-Cameron might be seen to have prefigured this thesis.) But for Anderson, in this Debate of 1972, God's plan for Salvation, consummated in the execution of God's Son, was the heart of a 'diametric contradiction' between Christianity and Islam.³⁶⁰ Referring specifically to the death and resurrection of Jesus, Anderson went on to say, 'Any theologically-educated Muslim would agree that there is a basic contradiction between Islam and Christianity.'³⁶¹ He argued that the very essence of Christianity is undermined because the Qur'an denies both the deity of Jesus and His crucifixion: 'Does not this, in fact, endanger the uniqueness of Christ? If it does not, then it seems to me that language means nothing whatever.'³⁶² For this reason, he argued that:

... to give them a consecrated Christian church for their purposes ... simply gives rise to the vague, wishy-washy idea that they are just alternative ways to God and one can choose this way or that and one comes to exactly the same position in the end. I simply do not believe this.³⁶³

³⁵⁸ See also his book, *The Mystery of the Incarnation* (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1978), p.60ff.

³⁵⁹ See Race, A., (1983, 1993). Before 1983, this position was found in the book of essays edited by John Hick, called *The Myth of God Incarnate* (SCM, London, 1977). In 1972, SCM republished the book by Troeltsch which advocated a similar position of relativism: Troeltsch, E., *The Absoluteness of Christianity* (1901) (SCM, London, 1972).

³⁶⁰ RP 7/72 3/3, Prof. J. N. D. Anderson (*London*), p.448.

³⁶¹ RP 7/72 3/3, Prof. J. N. D. Anderson (*London*), p.448.

³⁶² RP 7/72 3/3, Prof. J. N. D. Anderson (*London*), p.447.

³⁶³ RP 7/72 3/3, Prof. J. N. D. Anderson (*London*), p.448.

Anderson's emphasis on discontinuity seems to argue against the idea of grace in other faiths or other religions' rituals and ceremonies as potentially salvific structures. This 'vague wishy-washy idea' of there being many ways to reach the same God, is indeed the one suggested by Smith-Cameron's speech and would be described by Race as one of the characteristics of 'pluralism'. It would be referred to explicitly one year later, in July 1973.³⁶⁴

The theological assumption of a radical discontinuity between Christianity and other religions led Professor Anderson and several other members of Synod to propose that *Mission* should be the only context of any decision made by the Church of England on the use and disposal of a redundant church building. As we saw in Chapter 1, this is the logical extrapolation of the exclusivist position which argues that the only response to God's extraordinary mercy to human sin, is to proclaim Salvation in Christ and bring people to explicit faith in Christ. Mr Bullimore argued:

... how would it in any way bring that Muslim community nearer to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ? I believe that we can say quite clearly and equivocally that it would not. It is more likely to help if, as Prof. Anderson suggested, they can see that we are sufficiently firm in our conviction of our rightness over these matters that we say to them 'No, because you are wrong in the things that you believe.'³⁶⁵

It is clear that a Christology characterised by a theology of discontinuity will understand 'love' and 'charity' from the perspective of proclamation and conversion.

However, those who argued that a church *could* be offered for use by a Muslim community, had a different vision of 'the meaning of the Gospel':³⁶⁶ a vision whose

³⁶⁴ RP 7/73 4/2, The Revd H. W. F. Bishop, quoting from Dom Bede Griffiths, p.350.

³⁶⁵ RP 7/72 3/3, Mr J. W. M. Bullimore (*Wakefield*), pp.458–9.

³⁶⁶ RP 7/72 3/3, The Revd I. Smith-Cameron (*London*), p.452.

missiological roots might be traced to the implicit understanding of the Church of England as a National Church. The responsibility of the Church of England for every citizen of every parish was recalled by the Revd Dr Cope who had offered the biblical image of the Good Samaritan to illustrate the principle of ‘charity’.³⁶⁷ Here was a pragmatic understanding of the love of God: ‘It is a matter of urgency that an unequivocal expression of Christian charity and neighbourliness should be made by the Synod.’³⁶⁸ The Mission of the Church could only be furthered by such acts of love of neighbour. This is the inclusivist perspective, for whom Mission is an imperative but one that involved a starting point of care and concern for neighbour rather than a starting point of proclamation. Of course, it should be noted that charity and neighbourliness are not absent in those who are from the exclusivist ‘type’.

If Synod were to offer the Church Commissioners a principle from which to fashion a set of guidelines, what should its theological foundation be?³⁶⁹ If one defines Mission as the concern of Christians for those outside the Church, then it is clear that questions raised by the use and disposal of redundant church buildings were of missiological importance. While it is true that the two different Doctrines of God and of Mission and Salvation already noted in this Debate, lead to widely different priorities when considering what to do with a redundant church building, it is apparent that both exclusivism and inclusivism are equally concerned with the subject of Mission. Even the position identified as pluralist was concerned with the Mission of the Church, but for pluralism, Mission is about Dialogue in order to discover a common truth, or in

³⁶⁷ *RP 7/72 3/3*, The Revd Dr G. F. Cope (*Other Universities – Convocation of Canterbury*), p.454.

³⁶⁸ *RP 7/72 3/3*, The Revd Dr G. F. Cope (*Other Universities – Convocation of Canterbury*), p.453.

³⁶⁹ Questions of church property are the concern of the Church Commissioners. In the matter of Wakefield, the Church Commissioners had requested from the General Synod a principle, which might act as a guideline on the subject, for the future. The speech by Mr I. Bulmer-Thomas (*RP 7/72*, pp.448–450) is a good summary of the procedure on this matter.

order to work together for social justice. The theological differences should be understood in the context of the *relationship* between the theological and pastoral, between Doctrine and ethics. It is while wrestling with these questions over the next two decades that the relationship between pastoral and theological would be clarified and can be seen to shape certain differences of Doctrine. Here, it is only worth noting that these three very different perspectives can be traced back to a theological concern with the pastoral. In July 1972, it was the Dean of Norwich, the Very Revd A. B. Webster, who suggested an approach which, a decade later, would be developed by the Church of England and used to bridge a deepening division: ‘I would suggest that we should not in any way give the impression that because a church ceases to be used as a place of worship, the Spirit of God, as it were, ceases to be active in it,’ he said.³⁷⁰ ‘Surely this approach, that God is rather wider than our understanding, that He is more mysterious, that He is more tolerant, that He is more open – surely, this is one of the things that Christians have always tried to say.’³⁷¹ The introduction of mention of the third person of the Trinity and the possibility of God’s grace and Revelation beyond the boundaries of *solus Christus* might be a reminder of the presence of inclusivism in this Debate. However, it should be noted that nothing he says here could not also be understood as pluralist. This is an area of overlap between the two ‘types’.

At the beginning of the session, the Chairman reiterated the point that this motion was not asking for a resolution of the question of St Mary’s, but for a general Debate about a matter of principle, which could then be referred to the Church Commissioners.³⁷²

³⁷⁰ RP 7/72 3/3, The Very Revd A. B. Webster (*Dean of Norwich*), p.451.

³⁷¹ RP 7/72 3/3, The Very Revd A. B. Webster (*Dean of Norwich*), p.450.

³⁷² RP 7/72 3/3, Mr W. W. Campbell (*Newcastle*), p.445.

Confronted by ‘an expatriate community of another faith in need of help,’³⁷³ several members of Synod believed the motivating principle should be one of charity and love.³⁷⁴ For others, the ‘principle’ was the defence of the uniqueness of Christ and of the necessity of Mission,³⁷⁵ understood as proclamation and conversion. Finally, as we have seen, the Dean of Norwich suggested that it should be the recognition of the Spirit beyond the parameters of traditional Christianity.³⁷⁶ Each of these approaches would be developed and expanded in the Debates that followed, but for now I want to suggest that in these three responses (if one sees the Dean of Norwich’s contribution as bearing the hallmarks of ‘inclusivism’), it is possible to outline the basic parameters of what would come to be called the ‘three-fold paradigm’.

At the end of the Debate Professor Lampe, of Cambridge University, tabled an amendment calling for ‘further consideration’³⁷⁷ of the subject by the Doctrine Commission and the Board for Social Responsibility.³⁷⁸ Distancing himself from what he called the ‘very difficult and delicate question of inter-faith relationships’, he suggested that there were also ‘a great number of highly complex theological, sociological and psychological issues’³⁷⁹ to be investigated. Moving the Debate away

³⁷³ *RP 7/72 3/3*, Mr W. W. Campbell (*Newcastle*), p.454.

³⁷⁴ *RP 7/72 3/3*, Mr I. Bulmer-Thomas (*London*) p.450, The Revd I. Smith-Cameron (*London*) p.452, Revd Dr G. F. Cope (*Other Universities – Convocation of Canterbury*), p.453.

³⁷⁵ So, *RP 7/72 3/3*, Prof. J. N. D. Anderson (*London*), p.447, & Mr J. W. M. Bullimore (*Wakefield*), p. 458.

³⁷⁶ *RP 7/72 3/3*, Very Revd A. B. Webster (*Dean of Norwich*), p.451.

³⁷⁷ *RP 7/72 3/3*, Henderson amendment, p.455.

³⁷⁸ *RP 7/723/3*, Lampe amendment, p.461. The Revd Prof. Geoffrey Lampe had taught theology at Oxford, Birmingham and Cambridge where he specialised in Patristics but was widely known for his work on the Holy Spirit, Baptism, Confirmation and Ecumenical collaboration with the Lutheran Church. He was the Ely Professor of Divinity at Cambridge from 1960–1970 and Regius Professor of Divinity from 1970 until his retirement in 1979. He was considered to be a ‘liberal evangelical’. He contributed two essays to the 1976 Doctrine Commission Report *Christian Believing* (SPCK, London, 1976), ‘The Origins of the Creeds’, pp.52–61 and an Individual Essay, p.100. His most important works were *The Seal of The Spirit* (Longmans, Green and Co., London, 1951), the *Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1961), and the 1976 Bampton Lectures *God as Spirit* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977).

³⁷⁹ *RP 7/72 3/3*, Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (*Cambridge University*), p.462.

from the subject of Mission, he suggested a study of the Doctrines of 'Holiness' and 'creation', in order to ask:

... what place, if any, there is for the distinction between sacred and common, and if there is, then where do we draw the line between them. We want to ask, again in the light of our Doctrine of creation, what we mean by any idea that the activity or presence of God can be specially focused on certain points within His material creation.³⁸⁰

Lampe would be one of the chief authors of the Report to be debated at General Synod in February 1973: *The Use of Church Properties for Community Activities in Multi-racial Areas: Memorandum of Comment* (GS 135); a Report which concerned itself chiefly with the subject of 'Holiness'.

Thus, only the second Debate in the General Synod to consider questions raised by other faiths in Britain concluded that it was a subject which required 'further consideration'. Members of Synod were just becoming aware of the pluralistic reality of so many of their parishes, and most of them were quite prepared to admit their ignorance of different cultures and faiths. Concern for these citizens led members to discuss both the missiological imperative of the Church of England and its responsibilities as a National Church. The key issues appeared to focus on the relationship between the theological and pastoral, between Doctrine and ethics; and it is from this peculiar concern of the Church of England, from this dialectic that future theologies would develop. The emphasis of this approach on discontinuity would sharpen the divide in future Debates, but in July 1972 there was already the first sign of the use of the work of the Spirit as a possible *Via Media*.

³⁸⁰ RP 7/72 3/3, Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (*Cambridge University*), p.462.

3.3.3 The End of the 1972 Debate

MOTION CARRIED

‘That the General Synod take note of the following resolution passed by the Wakefield Diocesan Synod:

“In view of the widespread interest and concern raised by the question of the future use of St. Mary's Church, Savile Town, Dewsbury, this Synod requests that the General Synod debate the principle of the use of consecrated buildings which have been declared redundant”.’

‘And instructs the Standing Committee to bring this matter before the Synod for further consideration when the Report of the Working Party set up by the Community and Race Relations Unit of the British Council of Churches is available, and instructs the Board for Mission and Unity to ascertain the views of the Missionary Societies’.³⁸¹

‘And in the meantime requests that the theological and sociological implications of this matter be referred to the Doctrinal Commission and the Board for Social Responsibility.’

It was left to the Standing Committee to decide which Board/Commission should take action. In the event, a Working Party (made up of the Secretaries of the BMU, for BSR and the Secretary of the Council for Places of Worship) worked on a Report of their own, which, as already noted, was primarily a consideration of the theological concept of ‘Holiness’.³⁸² Lampe, as a representative of the Doctrine Commission and one of its main authors, presented this Report to Synod in February 1973. It is to this Debate we now turn.

³⁸¹ ‘To speed up the process of consideration, the Standing Committee decided not to refer the BCC Report and the matters raised in the July 1972 Debate for separate study and Report by each of the bodies named in the motion passed at the end of that debate. Instead they instructed the Secretary-General to convene a working group, consisting of the Secretaries of the Boards of Mission and Unity and for Social Responsibility and the Secretary of the Council for Places of Worship. The Presidents nominated Canon Professor G.W.H. Lampe to take part in the working group as a representative of the Doctrine Commission.’ GS 135 *The Use of Church Properties for Community Activities in Multi-racial Areas: Memorandum of Comment*, p.2.

³⁸² ‘*The Use of Church Properties for Community Activities in Multi-racial Areas: Memorandum of Comment*’, (GS 135, 1973).

3.4 The 1973 February Debate

22nd FEBRUARY 1973 12.35 & 2.30pm

THE USE OF CHURCH BUILDINGS – REPORT BY A WORKING PARTY (GS 135)

ON THE BRITISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES' REPORT³⁸³

³⁸³ RP 2/73 4/1, pp.190–226.

CHAIR *Mr R. R. Feilden (Bath and Wells)*

SPEAKERS *Canon Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge University) PROPOSER*
Mr P. J. Lefroy-Owen (Lichfield) SECONDER
Mr O. W. H. Clark (Southwark)
Mr J. S. Marsh (Bristol)
The Revd H. W. F. Bishop, Chairman, Race Relations Unit, BCC –
(Religious Communities – Province of York)
Prof. J. N. D. Anderson (London)
Mr V. Menon (Chelmsford)
Canon Prof. J. R. Porter (Exeter)
Miss J. M. Henderson (Guildford)
The Revd A. H. M. Turner (Southwark)
Canon J. H. Churchill (St Edmundsbury and Ipswich) PROPOSER FOR 5 MINUTE
LIMIT
The Revd P. J. M. Bryan (Peterborough) SECONDER
Preb H. Cooper (London)
Canon J. G. Hunter (Liverpool)
Mrs M. B. Ridley (Third Church Estates Commissioner)
Mr J. Crompton (Leicester)
Canon H. J. Hammerton (Ripon)
The Revd C. J. F. Scott (Southwark)
Canon W. J. Westwood (Norwich) PROPOSER FOR MOTION TO BE PUT
The Archdeacon of Lincoln (Ven A. C. Smith) SECONDER
Canon Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge University) PROPOSER OF SECOND
MOTION
The Revd Dr G. F. Cope (Other Universities – Canterbury) SECONDER
Mr F. C. Kenderdine (Coventry)
Major W. F. Batt (Norwich)
Mr T. D. Belben (Bath and Wells)
The Archdeacon of Cornwall (Ven. P. C. Young)
Miss R. C. Howard (York)
The Revd G. Lawn (York)
Canon Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge University) PROPOSER OF THIRD
MOTION
Dr G. F. Cope (Other Universities – Canterbury) SECONDER
The Revd W. R. Bretherton (Liverpool)
The Archdeacon of Aston (The Ven. F. F. G. Warman)
Mr O. W. H. Clark (Southwark) AMENDMENT
Mr A. J. Bush (Bristol)
The Revd G. B. Austin (St Albans)
Preb. F. A. Piachaud (London)
The Revd Dr G. F. Cope (Other Universities – Canterbury)
Preb. P. H. Husbands (Lichfield)
Mr V. Menon (Chelmsford) AMENDMENT
The Revd E. J. Burns (Blackburn)
Dr O. Wright Holmes (Guildford)
Mr T. D. Belben (Bath and Wells)

MOTION PROPOSED *Canon Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge University)*

‘That the Synod do take note of this Report’³⁸⁴

MOTION PROPOSED *Canon Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge University)*

‘That this Synod commends to the dioceses the recommendation that the Church of England should demonstrate its fellowship with and care for other Christian Churches in need of meeting places for worship and other purposes, by allowing them whenever possible the use of Church of England churches and other premises or by transferring to them buildings which the Church of England no longer requires.’³⁸⁵

MOTION PROPOSED *Canon Prof. G.W.H Lampe (Cambridge University)*

‘That this Synod accepts the principle that churches which have been declared redundant and stripped of Christian symbols, may without impropriety be made available to those of other Faiths (*sic*) for worship or other purposes but considers that, in applying this principle to particular cases, due account should be taken of the attitude of the local ‘host’ community and of the likely effect upon those within the immigrant community who are Christians.’³⁸⁶

AMENDMENT PROPOSED (TO THIRD MOTION, ABOVE)
AND NEGATIVED³⁸⁷ *Mr O. W. H. Clark (Southwark)*

‘*Leave out* all words after “Synod” in line 1 and *insert*

“(a) notes with appreciation the remaining recommendations of the Interim Report of the BCC (CRRU) Working Party and the comments thereon by the Secretary-General’s group;

(b) recognises with the Working Party (para. 68) that “some Christians may not conscientiously be able to assent to particular recommendations” in their report;

Mr O. W. H. Clark (Southwark) PROPOSER

Mr M. Chandler (Birmingham) SECONDER

³⁸⁴ *The Use of Church Properties for Community Activities in Multi-racial Areas: Memorandum of Comment Report by the Standing Committee* (GS 135, 1973). Motion found in RP 2/73 4/1, p.191.

³⁸⁵ RP 2/73 4/1, p.218.

³⁸⁶ RP 2/73 4/1, p.220.

³⁸⁷ This use of English is transcribed from the RP.

(c) agrees with the Working Party (recommendation 11) in the terms of the comment thereon by the Secretary-General's group that "further consideration needs to be given to the theological issues", especially in regard to the questions of consecration and holy places, and to this end requests the Standing Committee to take the necessary steps so far as the Church of England is concerned to ensure that comprehensive consideration is given to these questions; and accordingly

(d) advises the BCC Working Party that pending the results of such further study, the Church of England –

(i) is unable to express any general view on the propriety or otherwise of making available to those non-Christian faiths premises which have ceased to be used for Christian worship and;

(ii) will continue to treat any particular case that may arise on its merits, and with very careful regard to local feelings on the part of both "hosts" and "immigrants".³⁸⁸

AMENDMENT PROPOSED (TO THIRD MOTION, ABOVE) *Mr V. Menon (Chelmsford)*

'Leave out all words after "declared redundant" in the second line and insert "and are of no historical or architectural merit should be demolished and the site sold in the open market if desired".'

MOTION PROPOSED *Mr O. W. H. Clark (Southwark)*

'That the debate on the motion as amended be now adjourned.'

As the list of motions and amendments shows, this Debate on *The Use of Church Properties for Community Activities in Multi-racial Areas* did indeed allow for the 'further consideration' which members had requested in July of the previous year. It had been anticipated in 1972 that the short Report would offer theological, psychological and doctrinal analysis of the concept of Holiness.³⁸⁹ Lampe's replies to

³⁸⁸ RP 2/73 4/1, pp.220–1.

³⁸⁹ The brief, the time allowed and the fact that this was also a response to the BCC Report, all meant that this was a short Report. However, the first paragraph of the Report stated that: 'The basis of any consideration of the use of redundant churches ought properly to be a full-scale theological study of the concept of Holiness, not only in relation to places of worship ... but in its more general application to people and things: in fact, to the created order itself. A study of this kind would be a considerable undertaking but without it no consideration of this subject can do much more than indicate, quite superficially, some of the problems that need to be discussed.' GS 135, para. 7, p.4.

the speeches in this Debate showed that he was anxious to distinguish between the concept of Holiness and what the Report referred to as:

... other elements ... which overlap with it and are often liable to become confused with it, but which ought as far as possible to be kept distinct. These are, first, the reverence which people may feel for places, buildings and things that symbolise their community and its traditions and aspirations and serve to identify, define and legitimise them; secondly, the legal concepts of consecration and dedication, as applied to buildings and other objects.³⁹⁰

Even in the Debate of July 1972, it was clear that Lampe had believed that understanding 'Holiness' subjectively would clarify the issues for the General Synod and thereby facilitate the sale of redundant churches to other faith communities.³⁹¹

Such a sale was one of the final recommendations of the BCC Report and, as the wording of the third motion showed, it was supported by the Church of England's Standing Committee, 'in principle'.³⁹² It had been possible, both for the committee of the BCC and for the Standing Committee's Working Party, to arrive at this conclusion by virtue of their adoption of a subjective (relational) concept of Holiness:

The kind of theology of Holiness which is sketched briefly in this document is in line with the general tendency of modern theology to think of Holiness, like righteousness and sin, as a relational

³⁹⁰ *RP 2/73 4/1*, p.191. Professor Lampe introduced this Report to the General Synod of the Church of England, but he had not been a member of the Working Group which wrote the BCC Report. That group had comprised: CHAIRMAN, Mr Derek Pattinson; VICE CHAIRMAN, The Revd Philip Morgan; SECRETARY, The Revd R. Elliott Kendall. MEMBERS, The Revd Anthony G. Burnham, Miss Gillian Carver, The Revd Joe Corbett, The Revd Kenneth Cracknell, The Revd Alan Davies, Mr R.G. Fairburn, The Revd Richard Hamper, The Revd Peter A. Kerridge, The Revd Stephen R. Lowe, The Revd George Mann, Mr Bernard Nicholls, Mr A. E. L. Parnis, The Revd Colin Scott. Observer, Mr J. M. Davies. Administrative Assistant, Miss Sheila Caygill.

³⁹¹ *RP 7/72 3/3*, Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (*Cambridge University*), p.452.

³⁹² '*The use of church properties for community activities in multi-racial areas: An Interim Report of the British Council of Churches*', *Community and Race Relations Unit Working Party*. (GS Misc. 18, 1972), para. 56, p.28. But both the original BCC report and the Church of England's comment on it include this caveat, 'After careful enquiry to establish the facts, Churches should when necessary exercise the right to decline the use of their premises to groups indulging in derogatory misrepresentation of the Christian faith for propaganda purposes, and to those intending to practice on the premises grosser forms of worship.' (GS 135) recommendation (4), p.18.

concept referring primarily to the personal relationship of God with his personal creatures.³⁹³

For Christian theology there is the fundamental problem of relating belief in God who is transcendent and omnipresent to the universal conviction, or almost universal conviction, of mankind that in some way the presence of God, or the 'availability' of God is specially focused or located in particular areas of the world that he has created.³⁹⁴

The Report appears to affirm Anderson's understanding of creation from the Debate of 1972, when it says:

The Doctrine of the creation of all that is not God by the Creator who 'the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain' radically differentiates monotheistic faith from those forms of religious belief which find the supernatural in animistically conceived spiritual presences, the indwelling of material objects and places by good or evil spirits, or the immanence in certain areas of potent but vaguely defined *mana*. On the other hand, Christians believe that the fullness of the transcendent deity dwells bodily in Christ; there is a localizing or focusing of God in terms of a human life involving created soul and body.³⁹⁵

This sets the scene for an interesting difference of understanding between the two academics, Lampe and Anderson, both from an evangelical, Low Church background. I have identified Lampe as possibly coming from a pluralist position from his 1976 work on the Doctrine Commission, although from his speeches in the 1972 Debate we can identify inclusivist elements of his theology. I have noted that Anderson seems to be an exclusivist from his speeches in the 1972 General Synod Debate. Anderson had shown that his own background in Mission led him to be concerned with a church building as inherently symbolic of the truth of Christ. While there is nothing about the Doctrine of creation as described in the previous quotation with which Anderson would disagree, this theology of the full indwelling of God in *Christ* and not in

³⁹³ RP 2/73 4/1, Canon Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (*Cambridge University*), p.191.

³⁹⁴ See (GS 135), para. 8, p.4.

³⁹⁵ See (GS 135,) para. 8, p.4.

material objects leads the Report to state that the Holiness of inanimate objects is *in use* only, because objects have only a Holiness established by and dependent upon the Holiness of people.³⁹⁶ Indeed, the BCC Report seemed to be suggesting that those who attribute intrinsic Holiness to buildings are more similar than they think to those of other religions who also hold a notion of objective Holiness, albeit one that is attributed to ‘idols’:

Generally speaking, it seems that a biblical Doctrine of Holiness would treat it primarily as a relationship of vocation and response, and therefore applicable to persons. In a secondary sense, things and institutions (Sabbath day, food laws and so on) may be observed as holy in so far as they express or foster that relationship.

... they only have a relative significance in proportion to their functional usefulness for ethical and personal Holiness... This is in line with the transference in the New Testament of the idea of ‘Temple’ or ‘house of God’ from buildings to people.³⁹⁷

The Report then goes on to consider the meaning of consecration, or ‘setting apart’. This had been one of the stumbling blocks in the Debate of July 1972; not because of the legal implications but rather because of the theology behind the concept. The Report suggests that it is an Old Testament theology, akin to that of the sanctity of the Temple which, as we have seen, is ‘resolved by the NT writers with remarkable unanimity’ when they transferred ‘the idea of the “Temple” or “house of God” from buildings to people.’³⁹⁸ The authors of this Report are uncomfortable with the idea of an ‘inherent Holiness’ of place and prefer the idea of a ‘vocational consecration.’³⁹⁹

By establishing his covenant with his people God consecrates them, or sets them apart as belonging to him and enlisted in his service (the new covenant established in Christ is, of course,

³⁹⁶ See (GS 135), paras 13 and 21, pp.6, 8.

³⁹⁷ See (GS 135), para. 16 and 17, p.7.

³⁹⁸ (GS 135), para. 17, p.7.

³⁹⁹ (GS 135), para. 18, p.8.

universal in its scope and no longer restricted to a particular nation). In this sense the universal community of the Church is consecrated as God's people, holy because called by him, and this consecration is an *arrhabon* (token first instalment) of the consecration which potentially pertains to the whole human race as the personal and rational creation of God.⁴⁰⁰

'Consecration for service', as the Report went on to explain, avoided the danger of seeing 'an inherent supernatural Holiness in a building, which the Report likened to the problems of the early church as it wrestled with a pagan pantheism which saw "demons" and "gods" in everything.'⁴⁰¹ This approach, with its emphasis on God's relationship with his people rather than the inherent sanctity of objects, this theology is identifiable as clearly more Protestant than Catholic. So, what of the sacramental principle? What of 'the idea that a material object or an institution may be a sign or token of a spiritual reality'?⁴⁰²

Thus, water, bread, wine when set in a certain context and used in a certain way, become efficacious signs of God's relationship with his people through Christ in the Holy Spirit. The fact that this is so reflects the proper relationship of the created order to the Creator. The sacramental elements can thus serve as tokens, or first-fruits, of the recognition that the whole material order belongs to God and that man's calling is to use it all within the framework of his own relationship to God and God's service. Similarly, the observance of particular times, e.g. Sunday, may be a token or 'instalment' of the consecration of the whole time of man's life to God's service. The 'setting apart' of particular places, such as churches, comes under this heading as well; it signifies, and realises in token form, man's acknowledgement of God's omnipresence and his duty to use space as well as time in God's service. Again, it seems that consecration is for use; Holiness is *in usu*.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰⁰ (GS 135), para. 18, p.8.

⁴⁰¹ (GS 135), para. 21, p.9.

⁴⁰² (GS 135), para. 20, p.9.

⁴⁰³ (GS 135), paras 20 and 21, p.9.

The idea of a sacrament as a 'token', or of 'man's acknowledgement of God' betrays an underdeveloped understanding of this 'Catholic' concept, although one should bear in mind the short length of this Report. However, this is undoubtedly a weakness in its theology and not one which Lampe addressed.

In introducing the Report and its recommendations, Lampe acknowledged that 'there may be members of the Synod who take another view of the whole Doctrine of Holiness from that which this memorandum puts forward', but he believed that the motion should be passed despite underlying theological tension.⁴⁰⁴ Such a decision, he argued, could be made on the basis of the principle of charity, in the light of 'the multi-racial and multi-faith society which we are in the process of becoming':⁴⁰⁵

I find it very hard to believe that a building we no longer use is an effective sign of the Lordship of Christ. A far better sign that Jesus is our Lord and that the cross is our banner is surely the consideration and care for our fellow men, servants of the same God, by whatever names they know him, which allows us to let them have what we no longer want, in order that they may worship. For a long time to come our society is going to be multi-religious, and we have to ask ourselves, do we want, indeed does God want, those whose faith is not at present Christian to practise their faith better and be helped to do so? I really think there is only one answer. The Gospel is not commended by hindering others from practising their religion.⁴⁰⁶

I have already identified the fact that Lampe's theology in the Debate of 1972 *may* be similar to the position Alan Race would categorise as inclusivist and it is worth noting here that this idea of other faiths being 'not at present Christian' is an important part of the fulfilment theology associated with inclusivists such as Karl Rahner. The pluralist position would say that the faith of the 'non-Christian' is sufficient for

⁴⁰⁴ *RP 2/73 4/1*, Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (*Cambridge University*), p.194.

⁴⁰⁵ *GS 135*, 'Church and Community', pp.12–14, and 'Some Practical Issues' pp.14–17. *RP 2/73 4/1*, Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (*Cambridge University*), p.193.

⁴⁰⁶ *RP 2/73 4/1*, Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (*Cambridge University*), p.195.

salvation without the necessity of a Judgement Day conversion. Using the language of the crusades,⁴⁰⁷ Professor Lampe argued that it was the symbolism of an act of charity which was the truly 'effective sign' of the Christian faith, not the building. Whilst there was no doubt that there would be symbolism in the Church of England refusing a redundant church building to a non-Christian community, there is also a certain naivety in believing that the Christian act of charity is what would be remembered by a local community and not the on-going symbolism of a church which Christians can no longer fill but which another faith community can.

It was at this point that Anderson interjected. If Lampe had hoped to 'avoid the thorny issue of inter-faith relations' by concentrating on the theology of Holiness, he was mistaken. Anderson could not agree with the limited definition of charity and hospitality suggested by the Report. As he put it, 'One can be utterly hospitable to other races, one can turn somersaults to help them, without making former churches available to them.'⁴⁰⁸ Or as another member of Synod who had converted from Hinduism to Christianity said in his argument that other faith communities should be given a *site* rather than the redundant church, 'Give us dignity, not charity. The Hindus do not want to be treated as second class citizens but as equals.'⁴⁰⁹ It was those members of the General Synod who had been involved in Mission (including Mr Menon) who, having first-hand knowledge of the *symbolic* impact of a church building, now put the question of Holiness back into the context of the missiological debate. Opposition to the recommendation to 'strip the building of its symbols' and then offer it to other faiths, was thus summarised:

⁴⁰⁷ 'I hope we shall not allow ourselves to think in terms of a sort of positional warfare between the faiths in which buildings are captured and surrendered like strong points and flags are hoisted and hauled down.' *RP* 2/73, p.195.

⁴⁰⁸ *RP* 2/73 4/1, Prof. J. N. D. Anderson (*London*), p.203.

⁴⁰⁹ *RP* 2/73 4/1, Mr V. Menon (*Chelmsford*), p.203.

I believe the motion to be unreal, because it not only ignores the impact of converted Christian buildings on the passing non-Christian, but assumes that one can remove Christian symbols. Are we to chisel out the Gothic windows before sale, to demolish the spires and towers, to change the cruciform building pattern?⁴¹⁰

This echoed the ‘views of Missionary Societies’,⁴¹¹ which had been sought after the last Synod Debate: ‘The Group acknowledged that there was no consensus of opinion within the Societies’ and admitted to the fact that ‘opinion was divided’. Specifically referring to the recommendation which Lampe had refashioned into the motion for Synod to debate, they said ‘even though the building might have been stripped of Christian symbols the architecture of the building constitutes a Christian symbol; it should therefore be demolished.’⁴¹²

It may have been this missiological concern which alerted Synod to the implications of a subjective view of Holiness, not least for a proper understanding of sacrament.

The point was taken up by Preb. H. Cooper:

The concept of Holiness is really the concept of separation ... Unless you divide something as being holy and set apart, then the concept of Holiness ceases to exist... It may be said that it is just a matter of seemliness, but it is much more than that. It is a matter of desecration. It is doubtful whether one can be a sacramental Christian unless one believes that things can be sanctified and become not merely signs, but effectual signs, which both do and are what they signify.⁴¹³

⁴¹⁰ *RP 2/73 4/1*, Canon J. G. Hunter (Liverpool), p.211.

⁴¹¹ (*GS 135*), Appendix 2, p.22. Church Missionary Society, United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.

⁴¹² (*GS 135*), Appendix 2, p.22.

⁴¹³ *RP 2/73*, pp.210, 211.

Here we find the Catholic voice with its emphasis on ‘effectual signs’. To insist, as did both the BCC Report and the Standing Committee’s memorandum of comment,⁴¹⁴ that Holiness resides not in a building or object, but in the *people* of God (as Smith-Cameron had first suggested in the July 1972 Debate),⁴¹⁵ was to take little account of the symbolism of a church building or its contents. The Report seemed to make the assumption that a relational concept of Holiness necessarily excludes a sacramental theology, and thus there is no development of the concept of symbol as sacrament. The relationship that people have with God *through* the signs and symbols which point to God, was considered to be the domain of psychology rather than theology. The majority of speeches show that members of Synod considered such a definition inadequate.⁴¹⁶ Mr O. W. H. Clark summed it up by saying, ‘When I stand in the ruins of Glastonbury or Fountains Abbey, am I just feeling reverence for old stones, and does that site only have Holiness on the odd occasion of the year when there may be a service in the ruins?’⁴¹⁷

Those who complained that the importance of symbolism had been omitted, that people’s ‘feelings’ on entering a ruin or disused building had been sidelined and even that the theology of the Old Testament had been ignored,⁴¹⁸ were all making the same point: the Report’s understanding of Holiness was too limited. Holiness is *both* subjective and objective. Here is evidence again of the theology of mutual correction; of the importance of both Protestant and Catholic elements of the Church of England

⁴¹⁴ Members of Synod will have had both the BCC Report and the Church of England’s Memorandum of Comment in front of them.

⁴¹⁵ *RP* 7/72 3/3, The Revd I. Smith-Cameron (*London*), p.543.

⁴¹⁶ So, see also Mr P. J. Lefroy-Owen (*Lichfield*), pp.196–7; Mr O. W. H. Clark (*Southwark*), pp.197–8; Canon Prof. J. R. Porter (*Exeter*), pp.204–6; The Revd A.H.M. Turner (*Southwark*), pp.207–8; Preb H. Cooper (*London*), pp.209–10; Canon J. G. Hunter (*Liverpool*), pp.210–11.

⁴¹⁷ *RP* 2/73 4/1, Mr O. W. H. Clark (*Southwark*), p.198.

⁴¹⁸ ‘The Old Testament knows degrees of Holiness ... but the distinction is never between persons and objects.’ *RP* 2/73 4/1, Canon Prof. J. R. Porter (*Exeter*), p.204.

debating a Report in the General Synod and showing how its narrowness makes it unacceptable to a great number of those present.

Of course, it should be noted that the BCC Report and the Memorandum from the Standing Committee were not intended to be theological treatises on the subject of Holiness (although, as we have seen, the Report did recommend that the subject deserved an in-depth theological study).⁴¹⁹ The context of both documents is the question of the use and disposal of redundant church buildings, as Lampe often reiterated in his responses to the Debate.⁴²⁰ Those who criticised it, however, believed that the theological scope of the Report was influenced by the decision to recommend that a redundant church be offered for use by a non-Christian community and Lampe *had* made it clear, in his introduction to the Debate, that community relations were a priority of the Report.⁴²¹

It may be that the authors of this Report had tried to separate theology from ‘psychology’ and emphasise charity as hospitality, but it is not possible for the Church of England to separate theology from the practice of faith and even in the BCC Report, it is clear that the foundation of the Report *is* its theology:

I think our discussion of Holiness may look like a rather academic exercise in theology, but we cannot sensibly discuss the use of our church buildings by other Christian communities or the possibility of making redundant churches available to people of non-Christian faiths without considering the basic question of what we mean when we say, for example, that a church is ‘God’s house’.⁴²²

⁴¹⁹ (GS 135), para. 7, p.4.

⁴²⁰ RP 2/73 4/1, Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge University), pp. 215–8 and pp.224–5.

⁴²¹ RP2/73 4/1, Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge University), p.193.

⁴²² RP 2/73 4/1, Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge University), p.191.

So it was to be expected that the tenor of the Debate would also be theological. Once Anderson had suggested that there were different perspectives from which the Christian principle of charity could be viewed, the floor was open to those who believed that the principle they were debating was not one of community relations but of Doctrine and Mission. As another member put it:

I am not happy about Professor Lampe's motion. I believe he is being unloving to Muslims, Hindus and the rest, because we read in the Bible that God so loved the world and those who were in the darkness that he sent Jesus to be the light of the world. If we encourage people to go on living in darkness, then they will not come to the light ... We do not want them to form little centres of their own in darkness ... We are just as much different from the Muslims and the Hindus as light is from darkness.⁴²³

This is the exclusivist position I outlined in Chapter 1: that the only response to God's extraordinary love and mercy is to offer this gift of light to those still in darkness.⁴²⁴

The inevitable conclusion of such a position was that even if no Christian community could be found to take over the redundant church, it should never be made available for use by a non-Christian community. In such circumstances, it was argued, it would be more charitable to demolish the building and sell the site.⁴²⁵

On a different note, just as Anderson had been anxious that the concept of 'hospitality' should not be used exclusively by those who wanted to offer a redundant church to other faiths, so there were members of Synod who wanted to make it clear

⁴²³ *RP 2/73 4/1*, Mr A. J. Bush (*Bristol*), p.222.

⁴²⁴ Chapter 1, page 70.

⁴²⁵ In this Group of Sessions (1973), this suggestion appeared in a speech by Mr J. S. Marsh (p.199) and was then drafted into the amendment proposed by Mr Menon at the conclusion of the debate (p.225). It had first been suggested as an option by the Bishop of Wakefield in July 1972 (*RP 7/72 3/3*, p.445) and, as we have seen, was also suggested by the Missionary Societies in their response (*GS 135*), Appendix 2, p.22.

that it was possible to offer a redundant church to other faiths and retain, above all, a commitment to the 'unique Revelation of Christ':⁴²⁶

What is needed is something at the deep theological level which will demonstrate that the unique Lordship of Christ, which we all acknowledge, does not in any way lay upon us a denial of the genuineness of many people who are not Christians. It is for us to make a kind of affirmation on this principal issue.⁴²⁷

This is where the boundaries between inclusivism and an hospitable exclusivism become blurred. In the same way that Anderson had alerted Synod to the missiological implications of a narrow understanding of the symbolism of a church building, so Piachaud now noted the dangers of a 'narrow, legalistic conception of our God'.⁴²⁸ The use of 'our God' identifies his comments as still within the missiological context. However, he was arguing for a wider, more inclusive understanding of Mission than that proposed by Professor Anderson and others. His reference to the 'love of God' is in contrast to the speech immediately before him (quoted earlier) which suggested that to allow non-Christians to use a redundant church was 'unloving'.⁴²⁹

These three interpretations of missiological methodology provide evidence, once again, of the different understandings of the Doctrine of God. In one of these, God is described as an exclusive truth, available to all, but revealed uniquely in Jesus. This is a loving God, but a God whose action in Jesus is a judgement on those who do not acknowledge it. Professor Anderson's speech about the 'position of converts from Islam to Christianity',⁴³⁰ the high profile of Mr V. Menon in this Debate and

⁴²⁶ *RP 2/73 4/1*, The Revd C. J. F. Scott (*Southwark*), p.214.

⁴²⁷ *RP 2/73 4/1*, Preb. F. A. Piachaud (*London*), p.223.

⁴²⁸ *RP 2/73 4/1*, Preb. F. A. Piachaud (*London*), p.223. 'It is our conception of God, the love of God and the greatness of God, that can be demonstrated by this act.'

⁴²⁹ *RP 2/73 4/1*, Mr A. J. Bush (*Bristol*), p.222.

⁴³⁰ *RP 2/73 4/1*, Prof. J. N. D. Anderson (*London*), p.203.

references to other faiths as being as different from the Christian faith as 'light is from darkness', all underline the *discontinuity* of the revelation of Jesus from any other revelation, in the same way as had been suggested in 1972.⁴³¹ From the other perspective, the sacrificial love of God, demonstrated uniquely in Jesus, is taken as the principal characteristic of God, and thus the imperative for Christians:

... because that unique Revelation shows us that God is love, there is our desire to meet newcomers in our community at their point of need. Just as God delivered his Son to those who rejected him, so I believe that love requires us to help those who do not share our faith in Christ, as an act of faith and confidence in a Gospel that can stand competition, and can show compassion to those from whom it differs.⁴³²

There is no reference to the Spirit, or God as Trinity. The Debate is primarily one about Revelation; and the focus is the theology of the Incarnation and the Atonement. However, there is no evidence either at this stage of the 'myth of God Incarnate' position that John Hick would advocate in 1977.

In conclusion, then, this Debate did indeed concern itself with the two issues raised by Professor Lampe: the theological question of Holiness and the pastoral principle of charity. However, members were not prepared to accept Lampe's proposal that theological disagreements about Holiness could be put aside in order to pass a motion which would demonstrate charity. Anderson was the first speaker to frame the Debate in the context of Mission, thereby questioning, once again, the underlying assumption that the *relationship* between the theological and the pastoral necessarily had to be understood as a form of 'charity' which, he argued, diluted the Gospel. His theological understanding of the concept of charity suggested a Doctrine of God

⁴³¹ RP 7/72 3/3, Prof. J. N. D. Anderson (*London*), p.448. '... a diametric contradiction between Christianity and Islam.'

⁴³² RP 2/73 4/1, The Revd C. J. F. Scott (*Southwark*), pp.214, 215.

characterised by discontinuity. The rise of the National Front on the domestic political scene and the increased awareness of the injustices of the apartheid system in South Africa, led members to fear being misrepresented by the press, should they reject the recommendations of the Report;⁴³³ and interestingly, a significant proportion of the Debate was concerned with the question of *symbolism* (in this case, of a redundant church building) and the effects on those *outside* the Church (Mission). This was how Anderson and others saw their responsibility to the 'parish': as one of proclaiming the truth to those 'in darkness'. The Report was criticised as an inadequate investigation of the complex subject of Holiness and for a superficial handling of the concepts of symbol and sacrament. Those who reintroduced the question of Mission were calling for a Report on good community relations to be informed by a theology of the cross: an *exclusive*–inclusivism. In this Debate of February 1973, the issue of the disposal of a redundant church raised issues that were both theological *and* pastoral. However, the speeches at this Debate seem to suggest that the discipline in which these two areas clearly overlap is not a subjective understanding of Holiness but *Mission* and its implications for the Doctrine of God. In this context, several members sought to define 'charity' and 'hospitality' against the previously raised theological background of discontinuity; thereby allowing other *Christian* groups to use a redundant Anglican church building, but preferring to demolish the building rather than offer it for use by a group of another faith.

This Debate of February 1973 is a good example of the way in which a representative and elected cross-section of the Church is capable of debating theological issues in an

⁴³³ The National Front is referred to by Prof. Lampe (p.196) and Canon H. J. Hammerton (*Guildford*) talked of Apartheid in South Africa (p.214). There are also numerous references to 'good community relations' (e.g. Miss J. M. Henderson p.206) and the fear of being considered 'anti-immigrant' (e.g. Mr O. W. H. Clark p.221).

intelligent and analytical way, of the theology of mutual correction to which I referred in Chapter 2. The overall critique of the Report by members of Synod was significant and not inaccurate. However, the mind of the Synod was not clear and the outcome was that an amended motion was passed which contradicted itself by offering two separate principles, saying on the one hand that redundant church buildings should be transferred to other Christian churches and on the other hand, that redundant church buildings should be demolished (see 3.4.1). After almost three hours of discussion, it was agreed that the Debate would be adjourned until the July session, when the procedural problems of an inconsistent motion could be tackled afresh.

3.4.1 The Conclusion of the 1973 February Debate

MOTION CARRIED

Canon Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge University),

Mr V. Menon (Chelmsford) & Mr O. W. H. Clark (Southwark).

‘That the Synod do take note of this Report’⁴³⁴

‘That this Synod commends to the dioceses the recommendation that the Church of England should demonstrate its fellowship with and care for other Christian Churches in need of meeting places for worship and other purposes, by allowing them whenever possible the use of Church of England churches and other premises or by transferring to them buildings which the Church of England no longer requires.’

‘That this Synod accepts the principle that churches which have been declared redundant and are of no historical or architectural merit should be demolished and the site sold in the open market if desired.’

‘That the debate on the motion as amended be now adjourned.’

⁴³⁴ *The Use of Church Properties for Community Activities in Multi-racial Areas: Memorandum of Comment* Report by the Standing Committee, (GS 135, 1973).

With contradictory motions, the Debate would have to be revisited in the July Group of Sessions of the same year, and it is to this Debate we now turn.

3.5 The 1973 July Debate

ADJOURNED DEBATE : 3rd JULY 1973 2pm

THE USE OF CHURCH BUILDINGS – REPORT BY A WORKING PARTY

(GS 135) ON THE BRITISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES' REPORT AND A SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT BY THE STANDING COMMITTEE (GS 135A)⁴³⁵

Further consideration was given to the motion of Professor G. W. H. Lampe, which had been carried at the February Group of Sessions in the following amended form:

MOTION

‘That this Synod accepts the principle that churches which have been declared redundant and are of no historical or architectural merit should be demolished and the site sold on the open market if desired.’⁴³⁶

⁴³⁵ RP 7/73 4/2, pp.344–354.

CHAIR *His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury (Dr A.M. Ramsey)*

SPEAKERS *Mr M. Chandler (on behalf of the Standing Committee) AMENDMENT*
Preb. P. H. Husbands (Lichfield)
Preb. F. A. Piachaud (London)
The Revd A. C. Hall (Birmingham)
The Archdeacon of Lincoln (Ven. A. C. Smith)
The Revd A. C. Hall (Birmingham)
The Bishop of Oxford (Rt Revd K. J. Woollcombe)
The Revd G. Lawn (York)
Dr H. M. Williams (Salisbury)
Canon G. O. Morgan (Manchester)
The Revd H. W. F. Bishop (Religious Communities – York)
The Revd G. Lawn (York)
Preb. F. A. Piachaud (London)
Prof. J. N. D. Anderson (London)
Preb. F. A. Piachaud (London)
Mr J. D. Brown (Blackburn)
The Bishop of Winchester (Rt Revd John V. Taylor)
The Revd H. W. F. Bishop (Religious Communities – York)
Dr Barbara Cawthorne (Lichfield)
Mr M. Chandler (on behalf of the Standing Committee)
Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge University)
Major W. F. Batt (Norwich)
The Revd C. J. F. Scott PROPOSER
Dr O. Wright Holmes (Guildford)

⁴³⁶ RP 7/73 4/2, p.344.

AMENDMENT

Mr M. Chandler (on behalf of the Standing Committee)

‘*Leave out* all words after “and” in line 2 and *insert* “for which an alternative use is sought should not be made available for the purposes of a non-Christian religious faith.”.’⁴³⁷

MOTION PROPOSED (AFTER AMENDMENT ABOVE PASSED)

‘That this Synod accepts the principle that churches which have been declared redundant and for which an alternative use is sought should not be made available for the purposes of a non-Christian religious faith.’⁴³⁸

MOTION PROPOSED *The Revd C. J. F. Scott*

‘That this Synod commends the memorandum of comment (GS 135) and the subsequent resolutions of Synod to the attention of the British Council of Churches’ Working Party in the preparation of its final report.’⁴³⁹

In the months between the February and July Group of Sessions, the Standing Committee of the General Synod had considered the proceedings of the February Debate and produced a supplementary Report (GS 135A) to clarify the way ahead, by offering a new amendment to the motion. It was hoped that this amendment incorporated ‘what was felt to be the decision of Synod on Mr Menon’s amendment and which makes that amendment consistent with the first of Lampe’s motions, which was passed by a substantial majority.’⁴⁴⁰ Mr Chandler, on behalf of the Standing Committee, made it clear that Lampe’s first two motions (see previous) would remain.

⁴³⁷ *RP 7/73 4/2*, p.344.

⁴³⁸ *RP 7/73 4/2*, p.352. ‘That the question be now put’.

⁴³⁹ *RP 7/73 4/2*, p.353.

⁴⁴⁰ *RP 7/73 4/2*, Mr M. Chandler, (*On Behalf of the Standing Committee*), p.345. The motion from the February 1973 debate which was passed with a ‘substantial majority’ was as follows:

MOTION PROPOSED *Canon Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (Cambridge University)*

‘That this Synod commends to the dioceses the recommendation that the Church of England should demonstrate its fellowship with and care for other Christian Churches in need of meeting places for worship and other purposes, by allowing them whenever possible the use of Church of England churches and other premises or by transferring to them buildings which the Church of England no longer requires.’ *RP 2/73 4/1*, p.218.

This Debate must only concern itself with providing a consistent expression of opinion and:

Some guidance to people, such as the Church Commissioners and, I suppose, diocesan redundant churches committees and other people concerned with the disposal of these buildings, as to roughly what the mind of the Church is. It is quite clear that the advice and guidance we are giving is that the mind of the Church is very wide open on this matter and that we are more or less equally divided ... But the more accurately we can give an indication, the better.⁴⁴¹

Mr Chandler's reference, in his introduction, to the 'divided mind' of Synod gives only the briefest indication of the emotions raised by the question of the use and disposal of redundant churches. Piachaud argued in the strongest terms against the newly worded amendment. 'I would rather have no motion at all on this subject than a rather unfortunate motion which picks out the non-Christian faiths as the people who must never possess a former church building', he said. Those who disagreed with him argued, once again from the exclusivist perspective, that 'if we have real love and compassion ... then our desire will be to lead people to Christ'.⁴⁴² One member used an example from her own missionary experience to explain why this should be:

In India I was connected with a large grammar school for boys. As one went round the compound, one could see three types of boys. There was the Hindu, with his long sad face; there was the Muslim with his rather aggressive countenance, and the third type were the Christian boys who had lovely open faces. It was just like going round a lovely Christian school in England. One could go round without speaking to the boys and pick out which were Hindus, Muslims and Christians. One saw the difference that Christ had made.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ RP 7/73 4/2, Mr M. Chandler (*Standing Committee*), p.351.

⁴⁴² RP 7/734/2, Dr Barbara Cawthorne (*Lichfield*), p.350.

⁴⁴³ RP 7/73 4/2, Dr Barbara Cawthorne (*Lichfield*), p.351.

The Revd H. Bishop, perhaps more accurately reflecting the position which Piachaud believed opinion had now moved to, quoted from a recent article by Dom Bede Griffiths:

‘What we have to envisage is not so much a conversion from one religion to another as a meeting of religions, in which each religion will bring its own unique insight into the divine mystery and its own understanding of the way of salvation, and Christ will finally be revealed as the supreme wisdom of God embracing all truth and bringing all men to salvation. But this may well not take place until the end of time. Certainly, for us, the first need is to recognise the grace and wisdom and Holiness which God has manifested in other religions, and to be willing to learn from them a deeper understanding of the mystery of Christ.’⁴⁴⁴

The immediate reaction to this was that these ‘beautiful words ... which sound so attractive, are not part of the teaching of the New Testament.’⁴⁴⁵ It is a useful illustration of the depths of the division between ‘the two opposing views.’⁴⁴⁶ From an evangelical perspective, this is because the idea of a theology of mutual correction is essentially a Liberal idea because truth cannot be corrected. However, it seems clear that the evangelical tradition believed that mutual correction must at least work in one way, by tempering Liberal Theology. It was a reminder that any ‘theology of mutual correction’ is not something which is easily attained. The divisions here are real and deep.

With the two previous Debates in mind, the theological differences can perhaps be explained once again in missiological terms. Certainly, for those who supported the

⁴⁴⁴ *RP* 7/73 4/2, The Revd H. Bishop (*York*), p.350. Quotation taken from an article in *The Tablet*, London, 14.4.73, p.13.

⁴⁴⁵ *RP* 7/73 4/2, Dr Barbara Cawthorne (*Lichfield*), p.350.

⁴⁴⁶ *RP* 7/73 4/2, Mr M. Chandler (*Standing Committee*), p.352.

amendment, the question of their own missionary experience, of conversion and of proclamation, was crucial to the argument:

I join with members like Professor Anderson and Mr Menon who speak with a great knowledge of other countries and other faiths. I too have served in an Islamic country ... I do not hold to the view that we have some sort of duty to promote a vague religiosity of other sorts of faith and other sorts of ethics. This is the Church of England, I hope a Christian Church, and our inevitable task is to promote Christianity and not to encourage alien and wrong faiths to set foot in this country and to take root here.⁴⁴⁷

Likewise, those who wished to disown the amendment also saw it as a question of Mission. Thus Professor Lampe, when called upon to speak, hoped that 'we shall ... reverse what was, I think, damage to the furtherance of the Gospel.'⁴⁴⁸ My suggestion is that issues being raised seem on a first reading to be methodological as well as theological and this combination of the two is at the heart of Practical Theology: what is the best *method* of promoting knowledge and understanding of Christ and Christianity? Is it by refusing to offer a redundant church but explaining clearly the reasons why? Or by refusing the Church but then assisting other faiths to find a suitable place to worship? Or, is it by offering them what the Church of England no longer needs? If the latter, is this means of demonstrating the 'higher ethic'⁴⁴⁹ of Christian love effective, or does it suggest that all religions are equal? However, the underlying tension hints at some of the complexities of Mission itself. What is the intention or goal of Mission? Is it merely a question of promoting knowledge and understanding of Christ? Can it be achieved by a demonstration of Christian living; or part of a wider, global ethic? Or must it be a matter of conversion to explicit faith in Christ? These questions would later be put into sharp relief by a document from the

⁴⁴⁷ *RP* 7/73 4/2, Mr J. D. Brown (Blackburn), p.349.

⁴⁴⁸ *RP* 7/73 4/2, Prof. G. W. H. Lampe (*Cambridge University*), p.352.

⁴⁴⁹ *RP* 7/73 4/2, Preb. F. A. Piachaud (*London*), p.349.

WCC which focussed on the question of Dialogue and *relationship*; concepts already suggested by the two previous Debates on this issue.⁴⁵⁰ But the different approaches apparent in these Debates arise from some fundamental *theological* differences which were hinted at in the Debate of February 1973 when members discussed aspects of the Doctrine of God. The reference to Dom Bede Griffiths in July 1973 is further indication of this. His argument that conversion is not necessary rests on the assumption that each religion has 'its own unique insight into the divine mystery and its own understanding of the way of salvation' and he was cited in Race's 1983 book as an example of 'pluralism'. It should be noted that the use of the singular, when referring to 'the way of salvation' and the reference to 'Christ who will finally be revealed as the supreme wisdom of God' both leave room for the concept of conversion. This also demonstrates that the dividing line here between inclusivism and pluralism is not as clear-cut as Race suggested it was. Griffiths' is a less pluralistic interpretation of Salvation than, perhaps, Smith-Cameron's use of 'a' people of God in the previous year. In 1973, Bede Griffiths was used to suggest that it is not conversion that is the starting point but rather, the 'meeting of religions', or building of a good relationship with people of other faiths. This echoes Smith-Cameron's emphasis on what the world religions share. It also introduces, in an explicit way, the concept of Salvation. Importantly, other faiths are seen here as vehicles of Salvation and not hindrances to it.

In the early 1970s, the parameters of a Theology of Religious Pluralism were just starting to be outlined, and as we have already seen, there were many members of

⁴⁵⁰ 1977 Chiang Mai Consultations which led to the WCC document *Guidelines on Dialogue*.

Synod who were ready to confess to their ignorance in these matters.⁴⁵¹ This allowed the few informed members of Synod to argue persuasively their particular case. At this stage, while touching on doctrinal questions of Christology, God and the Church, the central issue was clearly that of Mission and Salvation; the question was how to define what 'Mission' meant and what impact the responsibilities of being the Established Church should have in its definition. What may be discerned, however, are the early stages of some arguments that would be developed by theologians and practitioners alike. In the first Debate, there are already references to the role of the Spirit and the Trinitarian nature of Christian faith.⁴⁵² Building on Smith-Cameron's emphasis on commonality in 1972, the Bishop of Winchester, the Rt Revd John V. Taylor, suggested, for the first time in this Debate of July 1973, that in 'a material world' Christians should encourage 'a very real religious faith', albeit a faith 'in another world and another God'.⁴⁵³ This vision of all people of 'faith' standing together against the rising tide of secularism is one that, as I have mentioned earlier, would become popular and it represents what Race would identify as the pluralist approach to Mission. In 1994, the Prince of Wales (who would expect to receive Henry VIII's title of the Head of the Church of England and Defender of the Faith on

⁴⁵¹ So, for example, the Chairman of BMU. *RP 7/72 3/3*, The Earl of March, p.457.

⁴⁵² *RP 7/72 3/3*, The Very Revd A. B. Webster (*Dean of Norwich*), p.451 and Prof. J. N. D. Anderson (*London*), p.446, for example.

⁴⁵³ *RP 7/73 4/2*, p.349. John Vernon Taylor (1914–2001) worked as an Anglican Priest in Uganda, where he taught in a Theological College for nine years. When he returned to England, he worked for the International Missionary Council for five years before joining the Church Missionary Society (CMS) as Africa Secretary. He succeeded Max Warren as its General Secretary for ten years. His final posting was as Bishop of Winchester from 1974–1984. Inspired by Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison* (1953), he saw in the crucified Christ, God suffering in the midst of Creation, ultimately to redeem it. He was an important voice in the Church of England for an early version of inclusivism which suggested that God was revealed through the Holy Spirit in other religions. He wrote many books, most notable of which (for the purposes of this thesis) were *The Primal Vision* (SCM, London, 1963/2001), *The Go-Between God: The Holy Spirit and the Christian Mission* (SCM, London, 1972/2002), *The Christlike God* (SCM, London, 1992).

his accession to the throne) confirmed that he would like to see his future role as 'Defender of Faith'.⁴⁵⁴

At this Debate, in July 1973, the central concern had been clarification of a contradictory motion. To this end, once the amendment had been carried, the motion was put to a vote by Houses.⁴⁵⁵

MOTION BEFORE AMENDMENT

'That this Synod accepts the principle that churches which have been declared redundant and are of no historical or architectural merit should be demolished and the site sold on the open market if desired.'⁴⁵⁶

AMENDMENT

Mr M. Chandler (on behalf of the Standing Committee)

'Leave out all words after "and" in line 2 and insert "for which an alternative use is sought should not be made available for the purposes of a non-Christian religious faith."⁴⁵⁷

MOTION PROPOSED (AFTER AMENDMENT ABOVE PASSED)

'That this Synod accepts the principle that churches which have been declared redundant and for which an alternative use is sought should not be made available for the purposes of a non-Christian religious faith.'⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁴ The Prince of Wales first suggested this in 1994, but reiterated the point on his sixtieth birthday, on 13 November 2008. When and if he accedes to the throne, he wishes to take the title 'Defender of Faith', rather than 'Defender of the Faith.'

See www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/theroyalfamily/3454271/Prince-Charles-to-be-known-as-Defender-of-Faith.html (consulted July 2010). Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester, responded on Radio 4's *Today* programme, saying that the differences between religions made it impossible to defend all of them. "The coronation service is such that whoever takes the oaths actually takes oaths to defend the Christian faith," he said. "If, by saying that, he meant that he wanted to uphold the freedom of people of every faith, then I have no quarrel with that. But you can't defend every faith, because there are very serious differences among them." In an interview earlier in the week, the bishop – who was born a Muslim – called on fellow Anglicans to reassert Britain's "Christian character" and resist the trend towards a "multi-faith mish-mash". See www.christianmind.blogspot.com/prince-charles-defender-of-faiths.html (consulted July 2010).

⁴⁵⁵ Most of the motions that are put to the vote during the General Synod Groups of Sessions are passed or failed by a show of hands. Voting takes place by Houses only when the result is considered too close to call by a show of hands.

⁴⁵⁶ *RP* 7/73, p.344.

⁴⁵⁷ *RP* 7/73, p.344.

⁴⁵⁸ *RP* 7/73 4/1, p.352. 'That the question be now put'.

The result was as follows:

	<i>Ayes</i>	<i>Noes</i>
House of Bishops	4	21
House of Clergy	84	102
House of Laity	98	49

The motion, refusing the use of a redundant church building to ‘non-Christian’ faiths, was therefore negatived.

3.5.1 The Conclusion of the 1973 July Debate

Once a motion has failed, it is up to those at the Debate to consider any other motions that may have been tabled. So, immediately following the defeat of the above motion, the Revd C. J. F. Scott proposed a new motion commending GS 135 (the Church of England’s *Memorandum of Comment* on the BCC Report) and subsequent resolutions of Synod, to the BCC. The intention was to remind Synod that the BCC Report had been written to consider the question of the *underuse* of church buildings and perhaps to find a way to allow the Church of England to move on from the increasingly acrimonious division on the specific subject of use by another faith.⁴⁵⁹ The motion was passed on a show of hands and the Debate was drawn to an unsatisfactory close.

MOTION CARRIED

‘That this Synod commends the memorandum of comment (GS 135) and the subsequent resolutions of Synod to the attention of the British Council of Churches’ Working Party in the preparation of its final report.’

⁴⁵⁹ A survey, commissioned by the BCC for their Report, had demonstrated ‘that the average church hall is used for less than 1 ½ hours a day, and the average room in church premises for less than 10 minutes a day, Monday to Saturday.’ (*RP 7/73 4/1*, p.353). Mr Scott believed that the results of the survey showed ‘how totally we are failing in the stewardship of these premises which are entrusted to us by God.’ (*RP 7/73*, p.353). He hoped that his motion would recall the mind of Synod to this crucial point.

The Report to which the motion referred was published in 1974⁴⁶⁰ but the subject was not raised for Debate again by General Synod for another decade. On this occasion it was raised by the Church Commissioners who had another BCC Report in mind, to which I will now turn.

3.6 The Document Behind the 1983 Debate

In 1980, the BCC produced another, shorter, Report *The Use of Church Property in a Plural Society*, which points out that the practice of local churches has moved on:

There are far more black-led churches. People of other faiths are increasingly being helped to use some buildings. The *practices* of the churches in regard to sharing and disposing of church buildings are different from when the first of these reports was written... We

⁴⁶⁰ The BCC's final Report, to which this motion referred, *The Community Orientation of the Church* was published in 1974, after 27 months work. Perhaps influenced by the fierce debates in General Synod, the final Report offers a more cautious version of one of its original recommendations:

Church premises other than areas devoted to regular Christian worship should be made available to those of other faiths for their social purposes. Those who can do so conscientiously, legally and with pastoral responsibility should also make such premises available to people of other faiths for their religious purposes. (p.13)

In his description of the Anglican response Sansbury outlined how General Synod had passed two contradictory motions, which were then followed by a form of words, drafted by the Standing Committee that could be voted on. Hence the motion that redundant churches 'should not be made available for the purposes of a non-Christian religious faith.' Sansbury commented:

It was felt that this was what the majority in the February debate had wanted to say. However Synod defeated this form of words and so in the end refrained from committing itself one way or another on this issue. (p.24)

Sansbury then noted that Mr Derek Pattinson, Secretary-General of the General Synod, commented ('with characteristic Anglican restraint') 'it is not easy for people outside the Synod, or even those of us who serve it, to interpret this.'⁴⁶⁰ But, he concluded:

It can be fairly said, however, that many felt at a deep level that it would be wrong in the circumstances of this country, and at this time, for the General Synod to endorse the general principle that buildings which have been previously used for church worship can be properly handed over for use for religious purposes outside the Judeo-Christian tradition. At the same time, the fact that as Christians they are necessarily committed to the furthering of good community relations led them to hold back from affirming that buildings should never be so used. The point of the distinction is a fine one, but it reflects the difficult situation in which many find themselves. (p.24)

are left in no doubt about the urgent cries which come from the inner cities for more attention and more resources.⁴⁶¹

It also points out the confusion caused by the wide variety of legal provision affecting different churches. 'One church may have a much larger measure of control or discretion in the disposal of its buildings than another.' It comments that, 'Under the Pastoral Measure 1968 the Church of England has considerable freedom in the disposal of redundant buildings', and says 'it would be beneficial if the other churches could enjoy a similar freedom'. Because of the legal confusion it suggests that a central advice centre should be set up. It was not as a result of this Report, but with the Report in mind that the Church Commissioners of the Church of England raised this topic for Debate, once again, at the General Synod in 1983.

3.6.1 The 1983 Debate

9th FEBRUARY 1983 10.25am

THE USE OF REDUNDANT CHURCHES FOR THE WORSHIP OF NON-CHRISTIAN FAITHS⁴⁶²

MOTION PROPOSED *Canon C. J. F. Scott (Southwark)*

'That in the view of this Synod church buildings which have been declared redundant may in appropriate circumstances be made available to those of non-Christian Faiths for the purposes of their worship.'

⁴⁶¹ *The Use of Church Property in a Plural Society*, pp.4–5.

⁴⁶² *RP 2/83, 14/1*, pp.133–157.

CHAIR	<i>Canon A. D. Chesters (Durham)</i>
SPEAKERS	<i>Canon C. J. F. Scott (Southwark) PROPOSER</i>
	<i>Canon P. H. Boulton (Southwell)</i>
	<i>The Archdeacon of Cheltenham (Ven. T. E. Evans)</i>
	<i>The Bishop of Winchester (Rt. Revd John V. Taylor)</i>
	<i>Mrs M. H. Laird (St Albans)</i>
	<i>The Bishop of Manchester (Rt Revd S. E. F. Booth-Clibborn)</i>
	<i>The Bishop of Wolverhampton (Rt Revd B. Rogerson)</i>
	<i>The Provost of Bradford (Very Revd B. T. Jackson)</i>
	<i>Dr H. W. Sansom (Guildford) PROPOSER OF AMENDMENT</i>
	<i>Canon C. J. F. Scott (Southwark)</i>
	<i>Mr O. W. H. Clark (Southwark)</i>
	<i>Mr N. J. Tyndall (Coventry)</i>
	<i>The Revd B. M. M. O'Connor (Rochester) PROPOSER</i>
	<i>Canon P. H. Boulton (Southwell)</i>

AMENDMENT (LOST) *Dr H. W. Sansom (Guildford)*

Add at end:

“but that, when this happens, local Christians should also be encouraged to a loving, clear and outgoing witness to the uniqueness and Lordship of Christ”.

Ten years after the last Debate on the subject, the General Synod was once again requested to consider the principle of making redundant church buildings available for the worship of non-Christian faiths. This time, the request came directly from the Church Commissioners, as a result of the particular case of St Luke's Church, Southampton (in the diocese of Winchester), where the local Sikh community had asked that they might buy the redundant building and use it as a Gurdwara. The Bishop of Winchester, The Rt Revd John V. Taylor had provided members of Synod with extensive details of the case of St Luke's. However, the Chairman of this session was anxious to streamline the Debate as much as possible:

Members know very well that decisions in individual cases are for the Church Commissioners. The Commissioners are willing and ready to exercise this decision-making duty which the Pastoral Measure 1968 lays upon them. What they have asked for, and what the Synod should give them today, is its view on the principle, nothing more and nothing less.⁴⁶³

The Chairman, who was keen to order the speakers in such a way as to ‘balance the pros and cons’, set the format of the Debate.⁴⁶⁴ Thus, Canon C. J. F. Scott, who had spoken on this subject in the previous decade, would propose the motion and Canon P. Boulton, speaking against it, would follow after him.

From the perspective of the Church Commissioners there had been two important developments on this matter in the past ten years. The first was that between 1969 and

⁴⁶³ *RP 2/83 14/1*, Canon A. D. Chesters (*Durham*), pp.133–4.

⁴⁶⁴ *RP 2/83 14/1*, Canon A. D. Chesters (*Durham*), p.134.

1984 the Church of England declared 1,086 churches redundant. In 1976 alone, one church was demolished every nine days.⁴⁶⁵ The second was that the Church Commissioners had received a small but growing number of applications from other faith communities to buy redundant church buildings. In proposing the motion, Scott summarised other changes of the last decade:

During these last 10 years we have also changed as a society. In 1973 we could talk about the non-Christian immigrant community and the host community. No longer is that distinction valid; we are a multi-faith society where non-Christian and Christian communities are indigenous and both are part of a largely secular society... In some areas it is the Church of England which is a minority religious group.⁴⁶⁶

The importance of this sense of being an integrated, 'multi-faith' society, was that it reinforced the argument used briefly in the 1970s, that the Church of England had a responsibility to do everything it could to uphold the rights of the citizens of England: In this case, 'the right of every man to worship according to his conscience.'⁴⁶⁷ Scott then continued: 'If we possess the means by which he may do so, then we must support it not merely with words but with deeds.'⁴⁶⁸ The increasing numbers of church buildings which had become redundant also shed new light on the arguments of the 1970s. If church buildings possess an objective Holiness, then each one that becomes redundant should be demolished, Scott argued. You cannot allow some redundant churches to be used as social centres, banqueting halls or libraries and then

⁴⁶⁵ Hastings, A., *A History of English Christianity 1920 – 2000* (SCM, London, 1986/2006), p.602. There were three reasons for this. Firstly, there were fewer people attending church; secondly, there were fewer ordinands coming forward for training; and thirdly, as Hastings puts it 'Church buildings are static but populations shift.' p.602.

⁴⁶⁶ *RP 2/83 14/1*, p.134. Legally, a British Sikh is part of their local parish and has the right to be baptised, married or buried there. As a practicing Sikh, it is unlikely that they would want to exercise this right. However, this is the tension with which the Church of England lives: Church as National Church and Church as 'Confessional' Church.

⁴⁶⁷ *RP 2/83 14/1*, Canon C. J. F. Scott (*Southwark*), p.135.

⁴⁶⁸ *RP 2/83 14/1*, Canon C. J. F. Scott (*Southwark*), p.135.

refuse a non-Christian faith community on the grounds of objective Holiness.⁴⁶⁹ As to whether a church could be stripped of its Christian symbols, Scott argued that the majority of churches could have this done 'without offence'. Where the architecture made it impossible to do so, then 'clearly there would not in such cases exist appropriate circumstances to make them available for non-Christian worship.'⁴⁷⁰ What he did not address was the premise behind this argument, namely that a church building itself is an important (and symbolic) part of Christianity's witness to the world. His own theological justification of the motion is based on God's grace. 'God's grace reached out to us, before we turned to him; we are called to show a similar generosity to others in his name.'⁴⁷¹ What is interesting in this quotation is both the use of a Barthian phrase, 'God's grace reached out to us' but also a Rahnerian sense of the grace of God implicit in all human beings, 'before we turned to him.'

In his speech of opposition, Boulton began by talking about 'the fuller use of disused Church property for the promotion of better racial and inter-faith relations.'⁴⁷² The point he wanted to make was the same one that Anderson had made in 1973: that one can do everything possible to promote better community relations without handing over redundant churches for the use by non-Christians for worship.⁴⁷³ Such non-Christian communities would understand this refusal, Boulton argued, because from his 'own investigations of Muslims and Hindus' he had concluded that:

... once they take over a building there is no question of giving it up again even if it becomes redundant amongst their community.

⁴⁶⁹ *RP 2/83 14/1*, Canon C. J. F. Scott (*Southwark*), p.136. What is interesting to note is that the 1973 Debate about 'Holiness' was not resurrected in this session. All those who did refer to it (for example, the Archdeacon of Cheltenham, Ven. T. E. Evans, p.142) now seemed to agree that Holiness was determined by use, rather than being intrinsic to the fabric of the building.

⁴⁷⁰ *RP 2/83 14/1*, Canon C. J. F. Scott (*Southwark*), p.136.

⁴⁷¹ *RP 2/83 14/1*, Canon C. J. F. Scott (*Southwark*), p.135.

⁴⁷² *RP 2/83 14/1*, Canon P. H. Boulton (*Southwell*), p.137.

⁴⁷³ *RP 2/73 4/1*, Prof. J. N. D. Anderson (*London*), p.203.

It will remain as a temple and as a shrine for the rest of time.
There is no question, if this type of community moved, that it
would be handed over.⁴⁷⁴

If the Church was to refuse the request, however, it was important that the non-Christian community in question be given ‘what they really do need’, namely ‘support in obtaining planning permission very often for building completely new buildings.’⁴⁷⁵ Allowing such new building to take place on the site of a demolished church was, in Boulton’s view, further evidence of how the Church could support these communities. This last suggestion almost seems to contradict Boulton’s final statement, which argued, with many of those of the 1970s debates, that a building is a powerful symbol of witness. If a church building has been in one place for many years then it is possible that its absence may speak as loudly to the local community as would its presence. The message given by the erection of a mosque or a temple in its place is not much weaker than the message given by the use of a disused church for Muslim or Hindu worship. Perhaps the only difference is that time might erase the memories of the church building if it has been demolished; although the perception of ‘competing faiths’ might artificially prolong the memory. There is a sense of this in the speech of one member of Synod who felt that a supermarket would be a better use of such a site:

But surely, it will be said, a Sikh temple would be better than a supermarket. Yes, but a supermarket is at least ‘neutral’ in its intent in this context. It is not to be used expressly for teaching that which will necessarily be to some extent anti-Christian, as use that will amount morally if not legally to a breach of trust in relation to the former use of that building.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷⁴ *RP 2/83 14/1*, Canon P. H. Boulton (*Southwell*), p.139.

⁴⁷⁵ *RP 2/83 14/1*, Canon P. H. Boulton (*Southwell*), p.139.

⁴⁷⁶ *RP 2/83 14/1* Mr O. W. H. Clark (*Southwark*), p.152.

There is, however, a difference between the use of this argument in the 1970s and its appearance in this Debate ten years later. As in 1972 and 1973, the impact of the *symbol* on the person in the street, of one religion replacing another in its use of an empty building, was now being weighed against the impact on relations between two faith communities. But two facts of life in 1983 can be seen to sharpen the tension considerably: the first was that secularism was no longer a distant threat but a fact of daily life,⁴⁷⁷ and the close partner of secularism was an increasing ignorance among the British public about matters of religion, not least about Christianity. So, when Mrs M. Laird expressed her fears about the impact on a group of sixth formers of a church building used by another faith community for worship, it was an important contribution to the Debate:

I also work among young people and I am acutely aware of the confusion which allowing a church building, even though redundant, to be used by another faith for worship could cause ... There is already enough misunderstanding about the Christian faith.⁴⁷⁸

However, the second sea change that had taken place in the last decade was the impact on the Church and nation of the concept of 'Dialogue'. The Rt Revd B. Rogerson, Bishop of Wolverhampton, and member of the IFCG, was afraid that the potential harm done to local interfaith community relations if such a request for the use of a redundant church building were turned down was reason enough to support the motion being debated now:

It is not just about buildings that we are talking this morning. We are talking about the ethos of a community, and I believe that that is important. It can no longer be said that we live in one culture. We have in our midst those who have a culture and history which

⁴⁷⁷ Hastings, A., *A History of English Christianity 1920–2000* (SCM, London, 1986/2001), pp.585–6 and pp.669–70.

⁴⁷⁸ *RP* 2/83 14/1, Mrs M. H. Laird (*St. Albans*), p.146.

now sit alongside ours, and a way forward has to be found. It will not be by just passing over a pre-packaged piece of truth; it can only be brought forward by the use of Dialogue, and Dialogue has as its basis the acknowledgement of the dignity and worth of the other, and part of this has to be seen in the way in which we deal with our physical resources. I believe it is important that we enable that dialogue to take place, and part of it means that we have to provide where possible the means for a community to meet together to develop its understanding, its social cohesion and culture.⁴⁷⁹

In the 1981 Debate on the 'Dialogue' document, which I shall consider in detail in the next chapter, members of Synod augmented the BCC/BMU concept of 'Dialogue' to include a specifically *Christ*-centred context and motivation, and referred to Dialogue as 'renewal'. In this Debate, 'Dialogue' is a consistent background theme and its application to the specific problem of the use of redundant church buildings allowed some members of Synod to develop the concept a little further. Thus, after quoting the fundamental belief of the BCC that 'The presence in Britain of people of other faiths in significant numbers is within the gracious purpose of God', Rogerson said:

God, who makes that gracious initiative towards us in Christ, is in fact asking us to do the same, and that Christians, in the preaching of the Gospel, have to take risks, the risk that we might be misunderstood, the risk that we might fail – but there, the Cross looked like that, did it not? It is only out of taking that risk that new life may come.⁴⁸⁰

Neither of these points is controversial, because in themselves they do not lead to any particular theological perspective. However, those who supported the motion used other arguments that were more likely to lend weight to what had by now been identified here as the inclusivist approach to Religious Pluralism.⁴⁸¹ The first was a

⁴⁷⁹ RP 2/83 14/1, The Rt Revd B. Rogerson (*Bishop of Wolverhampton*), p.148.

⁴⁸⁰ RP 2/83 14/1, The Rt Revd B. Rogerson (*Bishop of Wolverhampton*), p.148.

⁴⁸¹ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993). The year of this Debate is the year that Race's book was published. However, the use of this terminology is absent from the Debate.

quotation from Vatican II that had been included at the end of the BCC document on 'Dialogue'. It urges:

Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, to acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians and also their social life and culture.⁴⁸²

Theologically, the recognition of 'spiritual and moral truths' in non-Christian faiths was a step which several members of Synod, in past Debates and present, had shown themselves unwilling to take. To the exclusivist this recognition of 'spiritual and moral truths' in other faiths seems to go further than the acknowledgement of 'good' in other faiths, qualifying the unique Revelation of God in Christ and implying that the non-Christian faiths might, in themselves, be vehicles of Salvation.

In 1961, John V. Taylor had written a book called *The Primal Vision*, where he seemed to develop Bruno Gutmann's missiological theories that the primal bonds of African family and tribal life formed a network of relationships which was fundamental to all forms of life.⁴⁸³ This approach to Mission through social relationships is a fair summary of the perspective found in many of the speeches in General Synod since 1972 and quoted in this text thus far.⁴⁸⁴ In arguing that the Church should sell St Luke's, Southampton, to the Sikh community, Taylor in 1983 was anxious first to counter the idea that this approach was evidence of a 'wishy-washy belief':

... in a paper that I read before the previous Archbishop of Canterbury on this question of Christian dialogue, I said: 'One of the most significant things we have in common on which to build

⁴⁸² RP 2/83 14/1, The Rt Revd B. Rogerson (*Bishop of Wolverhampton*), p.148.

⁴⁸³ Taylor, J. V. *The Primal Vision* (SCM, London, 1961), pp.50, 56, 117–21.

⁴⁸⁴ Two examples are, RP 7/72 3/3, The Revd I. Smith-Cameron (*London*), pp.451–3, RP 7/72 3/3, The Revd Dr G. H. Cope (*Other Universities – Convocation of Canterbury*), p.454.

our mutual understanding is the experience of having a conviction that by definition precludes the other person's belief. So' I went on 'I would plead with those who want to make all intractable convictions relative and level them down for the sake of a quick reconciliation, leave us at least our capacity for categorical assertion, for that is what we have in common.' I hold to that very firmly, and it would be a misrepresentation to suggest that those in favour of this motion are, as Prof. Anderson said, wishy-washy in our attitude to Christian conviction.⁴⁸⁵

From the rest of his speech it is possible to glean some sense of his own missiological perspective. He mentions, reluctantly (because of his dislike of 'scalp-hunting'), a Sikh convert to Christianity, of whom he said 'I was happy and glad to see this fulfilment of his spiritual pilgrimage.'⁴⁸⁶ Later, he refers to those of other faiths who 'have not seen the full Revelation in Jesus Christ'.⁴⁸⁷ There are two points to be made about these remarks: the first is that Taylor does not believe in a radical discontinuity between Christianity and the other faiths. The second is that, in referring to the 'full Revelation of Christ', there is an apparent implication that other faiths may, in themselves, offer a 'partial Revelation'. This idea is expanded a little when he talks about the biblical basis for Christian respect of 'God-fearers', who do not (yet) share the same faith: 'From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name is magnified among the Gentiles and a pure worship offered, but ye have defiled my name.'⁴⁸⁸ He refers to 'the clear disposition of Jesus towards an appreciative valuation of the faith and the prayer of non-Jews', using the examples of Jesus' sermon in Nazareth (Luke 4:16–27) and of his encounters with the centurion (Luke 7:9) and the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:25–30).⁴⁸⁹

⁴⁸⁵ *RP 2/83 14/1*, The Rt Rev J. V. Taylor (*Bishop of Winchester*), pp.143–4.

⁴⁸⁶ *RP 2/83 14/1*, The Rt Rev J. V. Taylor (*Bishop of Winchester*), p.144.

⁴⁸⁷ *RP 2/83 14/1*, The Rt Rev J. V. Taylor (*Bishop of Winchester*), p.145.

⁴⁸⁸ *RP 2/83 14/1*, The Rt Rev J. V. Taylor (*Bishop of Winchester*), p.144.

⁴⁸⁹ *RP 2/83 14/1*, The Rt Rev J. V. Taylor (*Bishop of Winchester*), p.144.

When faced with the argument that God *could* be found outside the strict confines of Christianity, a frequent response was to point to the dangers of ‘syncretism’; of an unclear fusing of the religions. This was the fear of those in 1966 who so disliked the Commonwealth service attended by the Queen. Syncretism was the reason that pluralism was distrusted in General Synod, with its idea that all faiths were relative, although many pluralists would also be anxious to avoid syncretism. There has long been a discussion within missiology about syncretism, in particular among those missionaries who have been concerned that they are not simply offering a Gospel of the West.⁴⁹⁰ Since the turn of the twentieth century, missionaries have tried to establish which parts of an indigenous culture can be incorporated into the Gospel message in order to make it more relevant, and which are actually *anti-Christian*.⁴⁹¹ In 1983, the fear of diluting the Gospel was already such that Dialogue with other faiths was distrusted because of the possible ‘syncretism’ that it might lead to.⁴⁹² Thus it was that the need to restate the *particularity* and *discontinuity* of Christianity as the Christian context for Dialogue was reiterated in this Debate of 1983, as it had been in the ‘Dialogue’ Debates of 1980 and 1981. So, in his introductory speech opposing the motion, Boulton said:

Muslims deny the deity of Christ and the reality of his crucifixion, and they say we have deserted the Scriptures. Does this not in fact mean that if a former Christian church becomes the base of a strident Muslim evangelism we are encouraging a dangerous syncretistic view of him who is the truth and an indifference to the unique revelation of Christ and his atoning sacrifice for the sins of all peoples?⁴⁹³

Another member put it more succinctly:

⁴⁹⁰ Yates, T., *Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994), Chapter 3 ‘Mission Appraised: 1920–40’, pp.57–93. See particularly his summary of the work of Roland Allen and Daniel Fleming pp.59–65.

⁴⁹¹ For another consideration of this see Donovan, V., *Christianity Rediscovered* (Fides/Claretian, Indiana, 1978 and SCM, London, 1982).

⁴⁹² *RP* 7/80 11/2, The Revd W. M. D. Persson (*Chester*), p.603.

⁴⁹³ *RP* 2/83 14/1, Canon P. H. Boulton (*Southwell*), p.139.

... they have come to a flabby syncretistic England where we generally say by the way we live and the way we behave that if you are religious all religions are the same, and it does not matter.⁴⁹⁴

Faced with the fact that the truth claims of the religions conflict, Boulton's response was that 'we must draw the line at handing over such buildings to non-Christian religions precisely because we claim a unique Revelation of God in Christ and must bear its cost.'⁴⁹⁵ It is clear that while both inclusivists and exclusivists will affirm the Doctrine of the unique Revelation of God in Christ they may both draw quite different practical conclusions from it.

Worth noting is that both Boulton and Clark were guilty of the same conflation of all 'religion' into one category. There is a theological reason behind this, which can be traced back to Karl Barth's separation of 'Religion' (man-made, cultural) from 'Revelation' (from God). And, as has been previously recorded, 'Revelation', for Barth, was fully and finally given in Jesus Christ.⁴⁹⁶ In this Debate of 1983, Boulton's categorisation of all 'non-Christian' religion into one group illustrated the importance of a detailed explanation of the wording of the motion, when it referred to 'appropriate circumstances'. That is to say, the Church Commissioners clearly believed there to be certain 'criteria for discernment' and it was necessary that these be explained if such a motion was ever to be passed. However, it would seem from some of the speeches quoted above that there was a section of General Synod who would still reject it, if those criteria suggested either that the major world religions were 'viable alternatives' to each other ('pluralism'), or even that there was saving truth to be found in the 'other' religions ('inclusivism'). It was not just a question of

⁴⁹⁴ RP 2/83 14/1, The Very Revd B. T. Jackson (*The Provost of Bradford*), p.149.

⁴⁹⁵ RP 2/83 14/1, Canon P. H. Boulton (*Southwell*), p.140.

⁴⁹⁶ See Chapter 1, page 70.

showing Christian love to other faith communities, nor even of respecting their religious freedom to worship, it was a question of ‘truth’, as two members made clear:

... to quote William Temple, in his comment on the command ‘Love one another as I have loved you’, he emphasised ‘This is not a command to the world, nor is it a command concerning the relation of Christians to non-Christians. It is a command to the Christian fellowship.’ ... [redundant church buildings] can be re-used, we ought to re-use them, but never in such a way as to affront by an unseemliness of use, an unseemliness which is not just non-Christian but *anti-Christian*.⁴⁹⁷

No freedom is absolute. Our religious freedoms are all restricted, theirs and ours, and if in purchasing their right to religious freedom we make available a Christian church building in which the unique revelation of God in Jesus Christ will be denied, then we are required to sear our own consciences ...⁴⁹⁸

This last point came from a man in the second highest position at the Cathedral in Bradford, a city known for its large Asian community.

With speakers as influential as Taylor in favour of this motion, it may have seemed to the Church Commissioners that the time had come when the General Synod *could* offer a principle by which to make further decisions on the subject of redundant church buildings. However, a member of the House of Laity who had drafted an amendment to the motion summed up the problems associated with this Debate when he said:

Whatever we do in this situation, we are, as many speakers have said, in danger of being misunderstood. If we refuse to make available a church to others who have asked for it, it could be interpreted as a slap in the face by the ethnic minority when we should be seeking to build bridges of love with these others living in our midst; but if we go ahead some, whether they are weaker

⁴⁹⁷ RP 2/83 14/1, Mr O. W. H. Clark (*Southwark*), p.152.

⁴⁹⁸ RP 2/83 14/1, The Very Revd B. T. Jackson (*The Provost of Bradford*), p.149.

Christians or non-Christians ... will think ... that we are implying that all ways of approaching God are equally good.⁴⁹⁹

This quotation shows that in order for Doctrine to be applied, there will always be non-Doctrinal factors such that its application can never be clearly worked out in terms of Race's typology: so an exclusivist might join with a pluralist on one issue, against an inclusivist. This is one of the areas in which the typology is open to criticism. The difficulty with the question of the use and disposal of redundant church buildings was that it involved both practical and theological issues that could not be easily separated. Practically, there were the feelings of the Christian community and the other faith community to be considered as well as questions about the extent of influence the Commissioners could have over the future use of a building once it was sold. Theologically, the speeches from this Debate, (as well as those of the Dialogue and Mission Debates of 1980 and 1981) illustrate the ongoing difficulties with the concept of 'Dialogue' and the unanswered questions about its relationship with Mission. Which approach is best for demonstrating and bearing witness to the Gospel: love and Dialogue, or an unequivocal statement of Doctrinal orthodoxy? Is 'witness' the same as 'proclamation'?

3.6.2 The Conclusion of the 1983 Debate

Knowing that the result was likely to be close, the Chairman of this Debate called for a vote on the motion by Houses.

MOTION PROPOSED *Canon C. J. F. Scott (Southwark)*

'That in the view of this Synod church buildings which have been declared redundant may in appropriate circumstances be made available to those of non-Christian Faiths for the purposes of their worship.'

⁴⁹⁹ *RP 2/83 14/1*, Dr H. W. Sansom (*Guildford*), p.150.

The result was as follows:

	<i>Ayes</i>	<i>Noes</i>
House of Bishops	25	3
House of Clergy	101	92
House of Laity	90	96

The motion was therefore lost by four votes in the House of Laity. The only way forward now would be for the Church Commissioners to come up with their own set of Guidelines and move a new Pastoral Measure.⁵⁰⁰ Certainly, the result of this Debate of 1983 was a good reminder to the Church Commissioners of the conservatism of Synod and the Laity in particular, but it had also offered a fair airing of the real difficulties of this problem. As the Archdeacon of Cheltenham said:

The religious affairs correspondent of the *Sunday Times* paid the Synod an unexpected compliment this week, for he said, rather surprisingly, that the Synod is an unusual assembly – many of its members only make up their minds after listening to the debate.⁵⁰¹

That no one who had opposed the motion had any proposal about what *should* be done suggests that the problem lay with the fact that the Dialogue/Mission relationship was still unclear and that the changing face of Mission had not yet been debated or spelled out. The rise of secularism and the increasing awareness of a multi-faith society should have made the boundaries clearer, but it seems that before the ‘appropriate circumstances’ could be detailed, there had to be an understanding that Mission was no longer ‘to the heathen’ but ‘among our neighbours’. Until members had been given the chance to clarify their thinking about Mission, as they would within a year,⁵⁰² perhaps it was inevitable that this motion would fail.

⁵⁰⁰ This resulted in the Church Commissioners ‘*Pastoral Measure 1983*’.

⁵⁰¹ *RP 2/83 14/1*, Ven. T. E. Evans (*Archdeacon of Cheltenham*), pp.140–1.

⁵⁰² The 1981 Debate on ‘Dialogue’ would request the BMU (IFCG) to produce a theological document to consider this question in-depth.

In the meantime, the Church Commissioners drew up a series of Guidelines ‘for the procedures to be followed when another religious body is interested in acquiring (under the Pastoral Measure 1983) an Anglican Church building by purchase or lease and using it for worship.’ As these became the *de facto* Guidelines during the next twelve years, it is worth quoting the section concerned with other faith communities in full. In the document, these are preceded by Guidelines for use by other Christian communities (i–iii). It was not only the sharing and use of church buildings with other faiths that had caused such disagreement within the Church of England: as the ecumenical councils of Britain and Ireland could testify, the Church still had great difficulties trusting and sharing with fellow-Christians. The Church Commissioners’ Guidelines on disposal to other faith communities are as follows:

Where a religious body has shown interest in using a redundant church, special care should be taken to consider the matter before the body concerned is encouraged to feel that they will be allowed to have the building. As regards use for worship by bodies other than the Church of England, the following guidance can be given:

- (iv) In the light of the unique Revelation of God in Jesus Christ, use for worship by adherents of a non-Christian faith is not to be regarded as an evidently suitable use which a diocesan uses committee (*sic*) should seek or prefer to other types of use. If, nevertheless, a case arises where the committee with the clear support of the Bishop would wish the Commissioners to consider such a proposal, then, in such a case, the Commissioners will judge the suitability of the proposed use on its merits, taking into account all the relevant circumstances. These will include:
 - (a) the belief, practices and attitudes to the Christian Church of the particular non-Christian body as manifested both locally and in other parts of the world;
 - (b) the historic and architectural nature and importance of the redundant building and its contents; the effect of any structural alterations needed to facilitate the proposed use; and the general significance of the building in the local and wider Christian community;
 - (c) the views of the Anglican and other Christian congregations and bodies in the locality (N.B. in the former case the views of the parochial church council and the deanery synod should follow debates on clearly expressed motions with votes being taken.);

- (d) the view of the MP, the local authorities and other representative figures; and the views of the local residents so far as these have been made known;
- (e) the availability or prospect of other alternative uses for the redundant building, especially use by another Christian denomination.

Conclusion:

When the Commissioners have before them all the relevant information concerning a specific proposal, they will be able to decide whether a draft redundancy scheme to give effect to this proposal should be published. If they do so decide, their final decision on whether or not to submit the scheme for confirmation by Order in Council cannot be taken until they have considered, after consultation with the Bishop, any representations received during the 28 days statutory notice period.

The exclusive nature of Christian theology is reiterated in the simple and powerful statement, which is the précis to all the points which follow: ‘In the light of the unique revelation of God in Jesus Christ, use for worship by adherents of a non-Christian faith is not to be regarded as an evidently suitable use ...’ (iv). What is interesting about these Guidelines is that they reflect the uneasiness expressed in the Synod Debates of the 1970s and 1980s; but it should be remembered that this uneasiness was often also the result of self-confessed ignorance. Notably, the cautious tone of the Commissioners Guidelines is very different from the ‘repeated refrain’ of the 1972 and 1974 BCC Reports; namely, the insistence on generosity towards other faith communities.

The key issue of consecration and the theological questions of ‘Holiness’ and sacramentality implicit in this are not raised other than in reference to the ‘historic and architectural’ nature of the building. However, the fact that all the speeches at the 1983 General Synod Debate seemed to agree on Holiness as something determined by use rather than that which could be conveyed as a permanent quality, meant that the ground was laid for the notion of consecration in perpetuity to be called into question.

3.7 The 1996 Debate

In what follows, I shall look first at how the Report was introduced to Synod, then in more detail at the Report itself and finally at the response of General Synod to the Report.

13th JULY 1996 11.30am

COMMUNITIES AND BUILDINGS – CHURCH OF ENGLAND PREMISES AND OTHER FAITHS: REPORT BY THE INTER-FAITH CONSULTATIVE GROUP OF THE BOARD OF MISSION (GS 1185)⁵⁰³

MOTION PROPOSED

The Bishop of Leicester (Rt Revd Tom Butler)

‘That the Synod do take note of this Report.’

MOTION PROPOSED

The Bishop of Leicester (Rt Revd Tom Butler)

‘That this Synod:

(a) believe that the report GS 1185 provides the proper framework for policy-making about the use of Church buildings by people of other faiths, and the disposal of Church buildings to people of other faiths; and

(b) commend it to dioceses for study and appropriate action.’

⁵⁰³ RP 7/96 27/2, pp.323–345. ‘GS’ is an abbreviation of ‘General Synod’ and is followed by the General Synod catalogue number.

CHAIR	<i>The Bishop in Europe (Rt Revd John Hind)</i>
SPEAKERS	<i>The Bishop of Leicester (Rt Revd Tom Butler) PROPOSER</i>
	<i>The Bishop of Rochester (Rt Revd Michael Nazir-Ali)</i>
	<i>Mr Julian Litten (Chelmsford)</i>
	<i>Miss Vasantha Gnanadoss (Southwark)</i>
	<i>Mrs Margaret Laird (Third Church Estates Commissioner, Ex-officio)</i>
	<i>Mr Ian Smith (York)</i>
	<i>The Bishop of Bradford (Rt Revd David Smith)</i>
	<i>Mrs Margaret Brown (Chichester)</i>
	<i>Revd Angus MacLeay (Carlisle)</i>
	<i>Canon David Gillett (Bristol)</i>
	<i>Mr Paul Boyd-Lee (Salisbury)</i>
	<i>Revd Frank White (Durham)</i>
	<i>Revd David Houlding (London)</i>
	<i>Canon Hugh Wilcox (St Albans)</i>

3.7.1 Background to the Debate

It took thirteen years before General Synod debated, once again, the use and disposal of redundant churches to other faith communities. 1996, and the publication of the IFCG Report *Communities and Buildings: Church of England premises and other faiths* (GS 1185), acts as the end point for material used as case studies on this subject in this thesis. The fact that other religions were a much more visible part of society meant that Synod members, too, were less ignorant than they had been in the early 1970s and 1980s and the Debate was, therefore, more informed than in previous years. Accepting the fact that a ‘common mind’ on this matter had ‘so far eluded the Church of England’,⁵⁰⁴ the intention of the Report was to set out the ‘policy’ of the Church of England ‘on these matters.’⁵⁰⁵

By the time the Report GS 1185 was published, the Church of England’s IFCG was an informed and well-practiced committee of theologians, priests and missionaries.⁵⁰⁶

The birth of such a group was the inevitable and important result of the Debates of the 1970s.⁵⁰⁷ As a sub-committee of the Church of England’s ‘Board of Mission and Unity’, the IFCG had cut its teeth on the intensively theological ‘Dialogue’ Debates of

⁵⁰⁴ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), para. 1.4, p.2.

⁵⁰⁵ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), p.4.

⁵⁰⁶ CHAIRMAN: The Rt. Revd Christopher Mayfield, now Bishop of Manchester.

MEMBERS: Mrs Barbara Butler; Dr. Owen Cole; Dr. Gavin D’Costa; The Revd Canon David Gillett; Miss Vasantha Gnanadoss; The Revd Canon Dr. Roger Hooker; The Revd Canon Michael Ipgrave; The Rt. Revd Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester; The Revd Alan Race; Dr. Elaine Sugden.

REPRESENTATIVES: Mr Alan Brown (Board of Education), The Revd Richard Crowson (Board for Social Responsibility), The Revd Michael Thorpe (Hospital Chaplaincies Council).

SECRETARY: The Revd Canon Dr. Christopher Lamb. Administrative Secretary: Mrs Pat Cutting.

⁵⁰⁷ As already mentioned in Chapter 2, the IFCG was the Church of England’s response to the BCC’s initiative in setting up the Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths (CRPOF) in 1977. Several key members of this ecumenical venture were Anglicans, for example, Canon Dr. Christopher Lamb and the Revd Max Warren. These then formed the core of the IFCG when it was established in 1980, as a theological advisory group to the Board of Mission and Unity.

the mid-1980s,⁵⁰⁸ and more recently, as noted in Chapter 2, had both completed a Report called *Multi Faith Worship* and submitted an important chapter to the Doctrine Committee's Report, *The Mystery of Salvation*.⁵⁰⁹ The Report, *Communities and Buildings* was written to offer Bishops and Church Commissioners, parish priests and their congregations some 'principles for disposal.'⁵¹⁰

3.7.2 Introducing the Report to Synod

Bishop Tom Butler, Bishop of Leicester (one of the Dioceses with the highest percentage of other faiths in the country), introduced the Report with a commitment to recognise the difficulties of the past, but to suggest that now was the time to overcome those difficulties:

This is a controversial subject ... but I do not believe that this is a controversial Report. On the contrary, I believe that it offers Synod, the Church Commissioners and the local church a helpful basis for policy formulation in a complex area which involves theology, history, law, inter-ethnic and inter-faith relationships and

⁵⁰⁸ The Inter-Faith Consultative Group's first project had been published as *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* in 1984. (Church House Publishing, London, 1984). Chapter 4 of this thesis looks in detail at the Debates which led to this Report.

⁵⁰⁹ *Multi Faith Worship?* (Church House Publishing, London, 1992). Doctrine Committee Report *The Mystery of Salvation* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996). Chapter 7 of this Report was written by the IFCG.

⁵¹⁰ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), para. 7.133 p.57. In twenty-four years there had been five Reports and four Debates. Of the five Reports, four were ecumenical; and the authors of the 1996 Report (*Communities and Buildings*) acknowledged their debt to the ecumenical perspective which had been so helpful over the years.

The five Reports are listed as:

BCC, 1972, *The Use of Church Properties for Community Activities in Multi-Racial Areas Interim report*. (Given the General Synod reference number GS Misc 18).

GS 135, *The Use of Church Properties for Community Activities in Multi-Racial Areas: Memorandum of Comment* (This document is a comment on the BCC report, above, by a standing committee of the Church of England. This was the report which was debated in the February Groups of Sessions of General Synod, 1973. When that debate failed to achieve a resolution, the report was supplemented by GS 135A *Supplementary Report by the Standing Committee* for the July Group of Sessions, 1973).

BCC, 1973, *Church, Property and People* (Survey by Ann Holmes. Referred to in General Synod, July Group of Sessions, 1973).

BCC, 1974, *The Community Orientation of the Church* (Final Report. Not debated in General Synod).

BCC, 1980, *The Use of Church Property in a Plural Society* (Not debated in General Synod).

Also worth noting is CTE, 1993, *The Report of a Working Party on the Sharing and Sale of Church Buildings* (Not debated by the General Synod, but used extensively in the 1996 report *Communities and Buildings*).

the responsible but generous stewardship of our material resources. Mission in England today involves all these things and it is that which the Report wants to promote through missionary hospitality.⁵¹¹

This quotation succinctly encapsulates everything which Butler believed this Report had to offer the July 1996 General Synod Debate. *Communities and Buildings* suggested that the Church of England could learn from the past; and its second chapter outlined all the Debates and Reports from 1972–1984.⁵¹² It noted that the ‘new questions’ which the Church had been facing since 1972, arose as a result of the fact that the parishes of the Church of England now contained ‘vigorous communities of other faiths’, something which the original authors of the canons and pastoral regulations of the Church could not have envisaged.⁵¹³ This was the reason why new Guidelines had to be found; the historical context of the canons had changed, rendering them in urgent need of updating. In effect, this Report was an attempt to expand on the Commissioner’s Guidelines and to have them ratified by the General Synod.

However, Butler also acknowledged that this was not only a matter of ‘policy formulation’ and ‘law’ but also of ‘theology’.⁵¹⁴ The requests by communities of other faiths to use, and sometimes purchase, Christian premises, raised important issues which had to be addressed theologically. *Communities and Buildings* suggested two particular questions to ‘bring to Scripture’: the significance of ‘sacred space and holy buildings’ on the one hand and ‘how to regard the desire of other faith communities to

⁵¹¹ RP 7/96 27/2, The Rt Revd Tom Butler (*Bishop of Leicester*), p.327.

⁵¹² *Communities and Buildings*, ‘Debates and decisions within the British Churches 1971–1984’, Chapter 2, pp.6–19.

⁵¹³ *Communities and Buildings*, Preface, p.vii. Bishop Tom preferred to call them ‘our people’, RP 7/96 27/2, The Rt Revd Tom Butler (*Bishop of Leicester*), p.323.

⁵¹⁴ RP 7/96 27/2, The Rt Revd Tom Butler (*Bishop of Leicester*), p.327.

pray and worship' on the other.⁵¹⁵ I have already shown how the primary theological emphasis of the Debates up to this point had been one of Mission and Butler acknowledged this when he put all the 'complex' elements of this Report ('theology', 'history', 'law', 'inter-ethnic and interfaith relationships', 'policy formulations' and 'generous stewardship') firmly into a missiological framework, whilst acknowledging the theological differences which this topic had raised in the past. In doing so, he echoed the 'exclusive' introduction of the Church Commissioner's Guidelines, 'In the light of the unique Revelation of God in Jesus Christ...' But he then used a very significant phrase (not found in the Report itself), which he must have hoped would offer a way in which these differences can be held in creative tension:⁵¹⁶ 'Mission in England today involves all these things and it is that which the report wants to promote through *missionary hospitality*.'⁵¹⁷ Here is a phrase which acknowledges the two important emphases that are characteristic of the Church of England as Established Church and which I have already traced back to the sixteenth century and through several Debates of the General Synod concerned with other faiths. It is this perspective which is also continually present in the Debates and more particularly in the Reports, which means that the Church of England's approach can never be understood simply as exclusivist in Race's terms.

That the concept of Mission acted as the framework for the entire document should not come as a surprise. As I have already alluded to, Mission had always been the stable from which the study of Religious Pluralism had come. The IFCG was a committee within the Board of Mission and this Report was written in 'the Decade of

⁵¹⁵ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.51, p.20.

⁵¹⁶ In hoping this, he echoes the conclusion of the Report itself, which states 'If the arguments are so balanced, we should perhaps take seriously the requirement to hold each in tension with the other.' *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 7.129, p.56.

⁵¹⁷ *RP 7/96 27/2*, The Rt Revd Tom Butler (*Bishop of Leicester*), p.327. Emphasis mine.

Evangelism'.⁵¹⁸ The Report put it thus: 'The Decade of Evangelism focuses attention not only on the Gospel message of the Church, but also on the way that message is lived out in the day-to-day decisions made in the Church's name.'⁵¹⁹ Bishop Tom Butler's introductory speech at General Synod echoed the refrain, whilst maintaining his belief that Mission and evangelism could be encompassed within 'missionary hospitality': 'We are ... a people with a belief in Jesus Christ and a mission: our task is one of service and witness.'⁵²⁰ The question, as ever, was how best to further the Mission of the Church? Was it by stating the truth of Jesus Christ as God's only way to Salvation and refusing to have people of other faiths on Church premises, or was it by seeing 'hospitality' as a way of witnessing to the truth of Christ; both by words and actions? The Report sought to offer a *method* by which this 'missionary hospitality' might be achieved, both in its chapter on the 'use of Scripture' and in the principles it elucidates from Scripture and history.

3.7.3 The Report

Comprising both theologians and missionaries, the IFCG understood very well that each of the 'three positions' identified by Race in his three-fold typology ('exclusivism', 'inclusivism' and 'pluralism') looked to biblical authority to consolidate their argument.⁵²¹ For this reason, the chapter on 'How do the Scriptures help us decide?' is an important part of the Report.⁵²² Not only does it consider the

⁵¹⁸ The 'Decade of Evangelism' was an initiative of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey: a ten-year project at the end of the twentieth century.

⁵¹⁹ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 1.10, p.4.

⁵²⁰ *RP* 7/96 27/2, The Rt Revd Tom Butler (*Bishop of Leicester*), p.323.

⁵²¹ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 2.21, p.9. Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993). Race begins each chapter (on 'exclusivism' pp.10–37, on 'inclusivism' pp.38–69 and on 'pluralism' pp.70–105) with several pages of Scriptural references.

⁵²² *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), Chapter 3, pp.20–31. Considering the arguments about biblical authority (on the subject of homosexuality) which then dominated the 1998 Lambeth Conference, two years later, this chapter was both timely and prophetic.

Scriptural basis for these three theological positions, but it attempts a simple lesson in hermeneutics at the same time. Of course, all Christians will look to biblical authority to consolidate their theological perspective, but the IFCG asks people to consider the fact that biblical hermeneutics is not a task to be undertaken lightly. Readers are reminded that Scripture ‘contains no reference to a church building’, and that ‘both the Old and New Testament deal with situations very different from our own.’⁵²³ The Report asks ‘what [do] we expect from Scripture?’ and reminds us that ‘in contemporary questions the Scriptures *help* us to decide. They do not decide for us.’⁵²⁴ In both cases the authors state ‘Scripture is applicable to our circumstances only by careful analogy’:

Hinduism and Buddhism lay beyond the knowledge of the authors of Scripture, and the great figures of Islam and Sikhism lived and taught long after the canon of Scripture was closed. Again, we have to work by principle and precedent.⁵²⁵

This important chapter of the Report, as well as looking for ‘principles and precedents’, understands ‘something fundamental to humanity’s apprehension of God: in seeking God and responding to his Holiness we require recognizable foci.’⁵²⁶ This is an attempt by the authors of the Report to acknowledge the powerful emotional response to church buildings expressed in previous Debates at General Synod; and would lead them to devote the whole of the next chapter to church buildings as places of ‘Meeting, Memory and Mystery’.⁵²⁷ In the chapter on Scripture, however, it led them to consider the Old Testament in some detail. Despite the fact that Christians often emphasise the Patriarchs as an itinerant ‘people of God’, who needed no one place of worship, the Report illustrates situations in Genesis where ‘there is a

⁵²³ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.50.1, p.20.

⁵²⁴ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.50.1, p.20.

⁵²⁵ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.51, p.21.

⁵²⁶ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.52, p.21.

⁵²⁷ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), Chapter 4, pp.32–42.

particular significance accorded to the place or the building where some event occurs... an epiphany takes place at a particular point in time which marks a meeting place between heaven and earth.’⁵²⁸ Indeed, ‘the stories of the Patriarchs include some specific illustrations of cultic practices.’⁵²⁹ The Report shows how it is not only the place, but the ritual associated with the place, which is significant. So, for example, in Jacob’s dream (Genesis 28. 10–22), the Report says:

The dream is transitory, but the power of the revelation endures, and the ritual is set up so that it shall endure, a mark of which is Jacob’s renaming of the place, *Bethel*, the House of God.⁵³⁰

It should be noted that the inclusion of this was also an acknowledgment of the depth of emotional attachment to church buildings which was such a marked feature of the Synod Debates of the 1970s and 1980s.

In a section on ‘Exodus’ and a consideration of Sinai, the Ark and the Tabernacle, the Report raised the concept of ‘sanctuary’:

Thus is generated the concept of a sanctuary, the idea of Ark and Tabernacle, which is a movable Sinai: and the general Holiness of the whole people is juxtaposed with the specific Holiness of some people (the priests) and some places (the Tabernacle). ‘And have them make me a sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them’ (Exodus 25.8).⁵³¹

The authors seemed to be reminding their readers that ‘Holiness’ in the Scriptures is not a simple concept. It is not just about the person and ministry of Christ or the gathering of His people. There is Holiness attached to place and even to objects within a place; a *holy materialism*, as the Report later called it, making reference to Lampe’s

⁵²⁸ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.53, p.21.

⁵²⁹ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.54, p.22.

⁵³⁰ *CB*: 3.54, p.22.

⁵³¹ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.55, pp.22–3.

previous study.⁵³² This is an example of mutual correction in action. In the discussion of the 'House of God' which follows, the Temple, its destruction and the Exile of the Jews, all contribute to a 'linear progression': from cultic places to Ark and Tabernacle on the move, from the Temple – where God's Holiness finds a permanent locus – to plural places which are Torah shrines. And this recognition of several different strands lead to the first evidence in the Report of what I have identified as a specifically Anglican approach: the requirement not for one approach *or* the other, but of a way to hold both together in creative tension. A more nuanced theology of mutual correction which has taken seriously the theology of Sacrament as well as the theology of God's nomadic people.⁵³³

It is important to see this development not so much as a progressive rejection of former ideas and practices which were now considered invalid but, rather, as evidence of the evolving nature of ideas of holy place appropriate to the particular situation.⁵³⁴

Consideration of the New Testament allowed the authors to 'note a continuation of the prophetic call for a re-evaluation and re-interpretation of what actually *goes on* in the relationship between God, place and worship.'⁵³⁵ So, 'Jesus' act of purging the temple of its moral defilement is in line with the prophetic challenge to human carelessness and presumption in relation to the Holiness of the Temple.'⁵³⁶ Nevertheless, the Report could not fail to see that:

The primary teaching of the New Testament is that the presence and glory of God reside in the person of Jesus. After the resurrection, it is the followers of Jesus who constitute a spiritual house of sacrifice and worship, living stones of which he is the

⁵³² *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.68.2, p.31.

⁵³³ See earlier reference to this: *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 7.129, p.56.

⁵³⁴ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.63, p.27.

⁵³⁵ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.64, p.27.

⁵³⁶ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.64, p.27.

chief cornerstone (1 Peter 2.5f). The whole system of sacrificial orderings has been superseded by the sacrifice of Christ once and for all. The implication can only be that the physical Temple is redundant (Hebrews 8,9).⁵³⁷

So much of the chapter on Scripture had been devoted to the Old Testament, precisely to contradict the view that the New Testament superseded the Old ('a progressive rejection').⁵³⁸ In this Report of 1996, the authors recognise the New Testament emphasis which is 'exclusively on the people of God as holy in a way which leaves no space for any particular places as being more holy than others':

But such a view can only be sustained by isolating the New Testament texts from the contexts immediately preceding and following them. Most therefore believe that the development and variety of thought and use of buildings in the Old Testament provide useful parameters for our evolving Christian understanding of holy places as channels for an authentic and positive response to God in worship.⁵³⁹

Such a view was not easily understood by some members of Synod who felt that the Old Testament emphasis was misplaced:

As far as I can see, we must surely interpret the Old Testament through the New and especially through what the report says about the Lord Jesus Christ being the fulfilment of so many of the cultic things in the Old Testament; or at least we must recognise what an authority such as Tom Wright calls the 'trajectory of scripture.' ... The presence of God is linked not to buildings but to the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ in whom he dwells; so I feel that if God has as it were moved out from a particular building ... there ought to be no problems about disposal, although we ought to tread very carefully in situations of shared use.⁵⁴⁰

Tom Butler responded to this perspective in his summary:

⁵³⁷ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.64, p.28.

⁵³⁸ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.67, p.30.

⁵³⁹ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.67, p.30.

⁵⁴⁰ *RP 7/96 27/2*, Revd Angus MacLeay (*Carlisle*), p.328.

I thank Angus MacLeay for saying that the report has good things to say about the New Testament but then did not develop them, in particular their emphasis on the holy people of God; the Bishop of Rochester helped us to understand why: because the working party was wanting to emphasise also the Holiness of buildings which has been perhaps neglected in some recent reports.⁵⁴¹

However, while the Report had suggested that its readers 'learn to take seriously the requirement to hold each [of the arguments] in tension with the other',⁵⁴² the Bishop of Rochester, the Right Revd Michael Nazir-Ali, made it clear that even the committee itself had not found it easy to come to a common mind:

It was a comprehensive group; there were joys working in such a group but also some tensions, and these tensions are apparent to those who read the Report with a discerning eye.⁵⁴³

And this, perhaps, is the difficulty with a theology of mutual correction. While one can applaud a Church of England document which tries to balance the different approaches of Scripture and to advise caution in the handling of Scripture (reminding readers of its complexity), nevertheless one cannot ignore the fact that those who view Scripture in one particular way do so because they have a distinct *theological* perspective, which is not easily reconciled with those who have a very different theological perspective. This is the question of truth and it is a question which does not go away. If the Church of England is to continue to stay together and include all the different theologies under one umbrella it does so because it understands, ultimately, that human apprehension of truth is never complete and that there is always some room, therefore, for the views of other Christians with different perspectives. This underlying belief that living with tension is part of the quest for

⁵⁴¹ *RP* 7/96 27/2, The Rt Revd Tom Butler (*Bishop of Leicester*), p.343.

⁵⁴² *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 7.129, p.56.

⁵⁴³ *RP* 7/96 27/2, The Rt Revd Michael Nazir-Ali (*Bishop of Rochester*), p.330.

truth is characteristic of both Anglican Ecclesiology and Anglican Theology. It is, as I said in the Introduction, the belief that truth is uncovered, little by little, on the way.⁵⁴⁴

Within the nine ‘emerging principles’ of Scripture,⁵⁴⁵ there are some vitally important points which, if expanded upon theologically, would certainly lead to Butler’s own solution of ‘missionary hospitality’. As these Scriptural principles form the basis of the Principles and Guidelines which this Report eventually arrives at, I am including them in full in the footnotes.⁵⁴⁶ With reference to the theology behind ‘hospitality’, points 3, 8 and 9 are worthy of particular attention. The three-fold paradigm was not mentioned either in the Report or the Debate. Yet, point 8 makes clear reference to ‘all those who worship in spirit and in truth’ which is a reminder of the inclusive view that the salvific revelation of God is present in the religious structures and beliefs of

⁵⁴⁴ Introduction, p.14.

⁵⁴⁵ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.67, pp.30–1.

⁵⁴⁶ 1. The sanctuary of a church and its effects confer a sense of Holiness, and of the meeting of earth and heaven. There are certain ‘natural’ symbols for Holiness and the representation of God such as ... a linear or central orientation of graded access to God, an upward movement that again symbolises the exalted God, and a cruciform shape with its particular Christological significance. As a consequence we may conclude that certain architectural features of church buildings cannot easily be overlaid or changed.

2. Worship uses the building as a focus or lens, but God is not confined there, only locally focused. We need not be suspicious of the *holy materialism* that pervades the Bible, and underestimate the importance of the Church’s buildings. God is present in his people in the world but in a different mode from what is possible within the sanctuary.

3. The Church is concerned with bringing in the Kingdom after the example of Christ; therefore it will seek to be a local focus for helping people to be part of God’s presence for others.

4. History and artistic expression matter and are important in understanding the development of our attitudes towards the use and disposal of buildings, but mission thinking demands a move outwards beyond buildings and static confinements.

5. There are notions of gradation within the concept of Holiness which suggest the need for a nuanced approach to different kinds of holy places and the different significance which they have for particular people in specific places at particular times.

6. Holy places can be either temporary or permanent in intention and significance, and, even where originally they were intended to be permanent, they can cease to be *holy places* in the light of fresh developments within the purposes and mission of God. It is also possible that the *departure of significance* is an aspect of judgment rather than a new stage in God’s pilgrimage with his people.

7. Allowing people of other faiths into the arena of Christian worship (both time and place) affords a witnessing encounter which does not proselytize.

8. The move towards the eschaton and the realisation of theophany is inclusive not exclusive of all who worship in spirit and truth.

9. It seems clear from the teaching and practice of Jesus, in particular, that what matters more than anything else is the *intention* of Christians concerning the use and disposal of their buildings. (CB, 3.67, pp.30–1).

other faiths. This is reinforced by the IFCG's use of 'inclusive' at this point. It is not something which an exclusivist could sign up to and, as such, represents a dividing line between the two. However, a pluralist would have no difficulty agreeing with this. So, point 8: 'the move towards the eschaton and the realisation of theophany is inclusive not exclusive of all who worship in spirit and truth.'⁵⁴⁷ It is not possible to ignore the theological implications of these 'emerging principles' and several of the speakers in General Synod in July 1996 were anxious to make explicit what they saw as the theology of this Report. Any reference to the three-fold paradigm that follows, however, is my own, for use as an analytical tool.

3.7.4 The Debate

As a bridge between the ideas of 'Holiness' suggested by the Report and the question of the desire of other faiths to pray and worship, Butler opened the Debate with this:

In Leicester a former URC church became a Jain temple. A couple of years afterwards one of my colleagues was showing round the building a group who had worshipped there previously. Some of these former worshippers had decided not to come, believing that the experience would be too painful for them, but those who did come, without exception, were deeply moved by the dignified beauty of the restored building ... One of the visitors reported later that he had been very reluctant to come but, he said, "One of the Jains said to me, 'You see, this is still a house of God,' and he was right".⁵⁴⁸

Another speaker, Dr Kathryn Morfey from the Winchester Diocese, talked about the only consecrated Church of England church ever to have been sold to another faith community. St Luke's, Southampton (the case which had raised the question for Debate in 1983) was indeed sold to the Sikh community in 1984. Morfey wanted to

⁵⁴⁷ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.67, p.30

⁵⁴⁸ *RP 7/96 27/2*, Dr Kathryn Morfey (*Winchester*), p.324.

question the point that selling a church building to another faith was the ‘third option’, which implied that a secular use was better.⁵⁴⁹ She referred to three redundant church buildings which she knew of in the city of Southampton where she worked. There was St Luke’s, which was now a Gurdwara, one near the station which was part-offices, part-restaurant and part place of entertainment, and a former army chapel which was now a commercial cinema. Her conclusion was simple: ‘Of these three buildings the one in religious use is the only one to my mind that is in seemly use.’⁵⁵⁰ In talking about how uncomfortable she felt about a commercial cinema with two large crosses at either end of the building and about her sense of the ‘seemliness’ of the Gurdwara, Morfey was expressing the reality of something which a few speakers in 1972 and 1973 had thought might be true: that ‘faiths’ would come to represent something in common with each other, which the secular world did not understand or appreciate. In the ‘emerging principles’ of Scripture, points 8 and 9 echoed this position.⁵⁵¹ I have already quoted point 8, but here is point 9: ‘It seems clear from the teaching and practice of Jesus, in particular, that what matters more than anything else is the intention of Christians concerning the use and disposal of their buildings.’

Another speaker identified herself as more ‘pluralist’ than any of the others who spoke at the Debate by referring to other faiths as co-workers in God’s Mission. Miss Vasantha Gnanadoss of Southwark Diocese, was one of the members of the IFCG. While she welcomed the Report as ‘bringing some order out of chaos’, she had an ‘aspiration’ which she hoped would be attainable ‘before too long.’

... I am asking for the fundamental acceptance of people of other faith traditions as co-workers in the service of God’s mission in

⁵⁴⁹ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), ‘Priorities’, p.58.

⁵⁵⁰ *RP 7/96 27/2*, Dr Kathryn Morfey (*Winchester*), p.239.

⁵⁵¹ *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.67, pp.30–1.

God's world. Given this fundamental acceptance, our decisions about the disposal and use of Church buildings would be based on an understanding that the presence of people of other faith traditions will add to the sanctity of our places of worship.⁵⁵²

This last point can be interpreted broadly as either pluralist or inclusivist. However, the use of 'God's mission in God's world' suggested that this was not a Christological perspective and therefore *not* an exclusivist perspective; as such, it would also have made many members of Synod uncomfortable. Theologically, this seems to echo the position which believes that all religions are revelations of the same God and all are equal in their effectiveness for Salvation. This is not the 'Mission' that Butler had in mind. His perspective was rather more uniquely Anglican because it was concerned with the Established Church. His speech was a clear declaration of where he stood, as a Bishop of the Church of England, whose pastoral care extends to every person in every parish in his multi-faith Diocese of Leicester:

When I occasionally speak around the country in dioceses other than my own and the question of other faiths is raised, people sometimes say, "Oh, we don't have that problem here" ... Living in Leicester, I do not feel that way at all because Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and people of other faiths are part of our city; they are all "our people".⁵⁵³

This sense of a countrywide jurisdiction is one of the unique features of the Established Church of England; and, as I argue in this thesis, its impact on Anglican Theology needs to be considered. It is not that there is an inevitable link between the perception of 'our people' and an inclusive theology; indeed the sense of responsibility for 'our people' led Mrs. Brown to say, later in this debate, that '...if we allow these people to continue in their present beliefs, surely we are depriving

⁵⁵² *RP 7/96 27/2*, Miss Vasantha Gnanadoss (*Southwark*), p.332.

⁵⁵³ *RP 7/96 27/2*, Rt Revd Tom Butler (*Bishop of Leicester*), p.323.

them of Christ and his great riches and depriving them of eternal life.’⁵⁵⁴ So, while the link between Establishment and one particular Theology of Religious Pluralism cannot be argued, I hope to show that this ‘duty of care’ can be found in many of the speeches of members of all three Houses of the General Synod and that the responsibilities of the parish system is one of many threads which goes to make up the Anglican perspective on interfaith matters. It is certainly what lies behind Butler’s call for a ‘missionary hospitality’.

But now we hear from those who found the inclusivism of the Report unpalatable. Mrs Margaret Brown had something to say about the exclusive place of Christ in the Church’s Mission:

Our Lord’s command was that we were to go and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, but are we doing this if we are going to give our buildings away to those who are not Christians? We know that Christ is the way, the truth and the life and that no man, to use Christ’s own words, “comes to the Father but by me”. Christ is the only way to salvation and if we allow these people to continue in their present beliefs, surely we are depriving them of Christ and his great riches and depriving them of the possibility of eternal life.⁵⁵⁵

It was her feeling that ‘this book (i.e. the Report) is biased towards people of other faiths. It is scraping the barrel with excuses against the Christian faith.’ For her, the idea of ‘missionary hospitality’ would have been a contradictory one. Mission could not be separated from evangelism and that meant winning people over for Christ. ‘Witness’, from this perspective, would always mean proclamation and conversion. ‘Dialogue’ was interpreted as ‘if we do not talk to them we are never going to win

⁵⁵⁴ *RP 7/96 27/2*, Mrs Margaret Brown (*Chichester*), p.337.

⁵⁵⁵ *RP 7/96 27/2*, Mrs Margaret Brown (*Chichester*), p.337.

them over for Christ.’⁵⁵⁶ This is not just emotional attachment to church buildings; an attachment that can be ‘explained away’ using the concepts of ‘meeting, memory and mystery.’ However important it was that this Report addressed these emotional issues where previous Reports had failed, the exclusivist position still could not find much in the Report that resonated with its own understanding of other faiths as entirely ‘other.’ The Right Revd Nazir-Ali touched on this when he talked about the need for the Report to think about ‘how space has become sacred’:

With Christian worship it is undoubtedly the case that buildings used for worship acquire a certain kind of character. There is also an atmosphere of numinousness which is especially Christian, just as places of worship used by people of other faiths acquire a numinousness of their own.⁵⁵⁷

Here is a very different position to the one which looked for ‘God’s mission in God’s world’. For Nazir-Ali, other faiths are just that: ‘other.’ They cannot be considered to be the same as Christianity in any way that will be effective for Salvation. He considers this difference between the faiths and the fact that ‘we cannot agree to use or disposal in ways that dishonour Christ or are contrary to the Christian faith’ to be ‘one side of the situation.’⁵⁵⁸ He then tells Synod what he considers the other side to be:

The other is the imperative to hospitality that some other speakers have mentioned, and I take that very seriously both in terms of use and in terms of disposal. Hospitality, however, can only be exercised if there are clear criteria both for people of other faiths and for other kinds of use.⁵⁵⁹

By putting ‘Christ’ on the one side and ‘hospitality’ on the other, he too is making it plain that he does not consider ‘missionary hospitality’ to be a means of reaching

⁵⁵⁶ *RP 7/96 27/2*, Mrs Margaret Brown (*Chichester*), p.337.

⁵⁵⁷ *RP 7/96 27/2*, The Rt Revd Michael Nazir-Ali (*Bishop of Rochester*), p.330.

⁵⁵⁸ *RP 7/96 27/2*, The Rt Revd Michael Nazir-Ali (*Bishop of Rochester*), p.330.

⁵⁵⁹ *RP 7/96 27/2*, The Rt Revd Michael Nazir-Ali (*Bishop of Rochester*), pp.330–1.

harmony between the theological positions. This is not a phrase which exclusivists find acceptable.

Despite vigorous debate and strong opinions voiced against the Report, Synod did eventually 'take note' of this Report and even 'commend it to the dioceses for study and appropriate action.' For there are indeed some serious theological differences still apparent among all Houses of the General Synod, as I hope I have shown. But in the end, this Report seems to have achieved what none of the other previous Reports, Debates and Private Members' Motions were able to achieve: consensus. It is possible to imagine that the Synod had exhausted itself in previous years, but with a change of membership in the House of Laity and House of Clergy every five years,⁵⁶⁰ there were not many members who would have remembered the Debates and Reports of the 1970s and 1980s. It may be that other faiths really had become an everyday part of British life by 1996, but the opening speech from Butler suggested this was not the case yet.⁵⁶¹ Certainly some of the speeches suggest that the rising tide of secularism was being felt more strongly as the 'other' to whom the Decade of Evangelism was aimed: and in such a climate, the use of a redundant church building by a Sikh or a Jain community was accepted as more seemly than its use by a commercial enterprise. In general, though, it appears that the Report by a pastorally experienced and theologically literate IFCG, finally gave the Church of England what it was looking for: a straightforward, user-friendly set of Guidelines to which any Bishop, priest or Parish Church Council (PCC) could turn in the event of another faith community asking to buy or use a Church property. The Guidelines seem to mirror the old

⁵⁶⁰ In the House of Bishops, the Diocesan Bishops do not change but there is a re-election of suffragan Bishops.

⁵⁶¹ 'When I occasionally speak around the country in dioceses other than my own and the question of other faiths is raised, people sometimes say, "Oh, we don't have that problem here" ...' *RP* 7/96 27/2, The Rt Revd Tom Butler (*Bishop of Leicester*), p.323.

Formularies and Ordinal of the Church of England and to be true to the original exclusive–inclusivism of the Thirty-Nine Articles. There is a strong emphasis on *solus Christus* and also a renewed sense of the importance of the church building and its role in Mission. By acknowledging the depth of emotional attachment people have to buildings, by carefully weighing both sides of the argument, by giving really practical and useful advice,⁵⁶² it offered people of different theological positions the chance to behave in a way that might promote the Gospel and not diminish it. There is a recovery here of the importance of the Catholic understanding of sacramentality and symbol as members of Synod from the Protestant evangelical tradition realised the symbolic value of a building. As well as this, there is a thread that runs through every argument – of the pastoral responsibility of the Established Church in this situation; and this has a significant impact on the final outcome, making sure that an Anglican Theology of Religions can never be described just as ‘exclusivism’, but always as exclusive–inclusivism. This is how the Church of England develops its theology: in practice, through Guidelines which are then lived out in local, parish situations. But this theology is not merely a theology of compromise, it has clear distinguishing features which identify it as part of Practical Theology and also as inclusivist. In particular, the idea that God has been revealed in other ways than *solus Christus* and therefore that other religions represent a partial revelation of what is fully revealed in Christ. Anglican Theology is Practical Theology because it begins with practical questions of how to be a believing (confessing) Church whilst also being a National Church with a legal responsibility of care towards its parishioners. This is what

⁵⁶² So, for example: ‘widespread local consultation’, including the MP and local council. ‘Public, clear and sensitive reasons given where a decision is made not to sell or lease a church building to another faith community.’ ‘Realistic discussion with the other faith community about the costs and burdens of historic, listed buildings.’ And also, ‘The expectation of regular meetings and building of friendships with other faiths who share use of a church property.’ *Communities and Buildings* pp.57–61 for a full list of ‘principles of use and the legal situation.’

encapsulates the idea of exclusive–inclusivism: or *Lex Credendi, Lex Orandi*. Ever since Henry VIII made the break with Rome on practical grounds and Elizabeth I was determined to form a uniting Church that allowed ‘divers Traditions and Ceremonies’ (Article XXXIV), the starting point of its Theology has been practical. For this reason, I cannot classify Anglican Theology as exclusivism, although – as we have already seen – the exclusivist voice in the Church of England is a vitally important part of its Doctrine. But the starting point of the Church of England, because it is an Established Church, *has* to be inclusivism as I hope I have begun to trace and will continue to do so in the Debates which follow. I agree with Browning that all theological thinking is essentially practical and what I hope I have shown is how the very practical question of what to do with redundant church buildings, led the Church of England to some fascinating discussions of theology. It seems as though the Church of England, whilst forged in the fires of the Practical is not happy unless it has also clearly stated its theological position. As with multi-faith worship, all practical issues lead immediately back to the call for theological exploration and clarification.

In the case of redundant church buildings the question of Mission and Salvation came to the fore in these theological discussions and for the Theology of Religions this is one of the central issues, which puts into sharp relief the Doctrines of God, Christ and the Church. In 1979 the WCC offered the Churches the concept of ‘Dialogue’ as an idea which could unite exclusivists, inclusivists and pluralists. The Church of England was not at all sure about this as a new ‘Doctrine’ and the Reports and Debates which follow are quite specifically theological in character. It is to these that I now turn.

CHAPTER 4

The Mission and Dialogue Debates

This chapter continues to use Debates and Reports from the General Synod of the Church of England to act as case studies in order to discover what shape an Anglican Practical Theology of Religious Pluralism might take. I have noted how the very practical questions of multi-faith worship and redundant church buildings were, in fact, raising important questions of the relationship between Mission and Dialogue. Now I turn to the Debates and Reports of the 1980s which would offer Synod a chance for some theological reflection on just these questions, initiated by documents from the World Council of Churches.

4.1 A Private Member's Motion⁵⁶³

In this thesis, I have argued that since the sixteenth century the Church of England has had a distinctive theological approach, noted particularly in the issues which Hooker defined as understandable through 'Positive Law'. However, in the relationship between Positive and Natural Law there is always the underlying question of how to discern which is Positive and which is Natural Law. I have suggested that one of the distinctive elements of Anglican Theology is in its *method* and I have called this a theology of mutual correction. The Reports and Debates thus far have offered evidence for this proposition, both in the way in which the Reports were written and in the way in which the Debates were conducted and eventually reached conclusions. However, these were Reports and Debates about very practical details of principles and guidelines. Such theology as there is within them has had to be carefully

⁵⁶³ A PMM is brought by a member of the Synod individually, rather than by the House of Bishops, the Archbishops Council or a Diocese. It is like a PMM in Parliament. The Business Committee has to choose between all the PMMs that come in. Not all get discussed. In this Debate of 1980, it was brought by the Revd W. M. D. Persson, from the Diocese of Chester.

extrapolated from the texts themselves, using the framework of Race's three-fold typology. Now, starting in 1980, there comes a series of three Debates in General Synod specifically concerned with the theological questions of Christology, God, Mission and Salvation, and the nature of the Church. In charting the responses to these I hope also to develop the theology behind some of the themes I have proposed so far: that Anglican Theology is Practical Theology (derived from the experience of being the National Church), that it is a theology of mutual correction, and that its foundation lies in the sixteenth century, with Hooker's 'three legged stool' of Scripture, Reason and Tradition. The Debates began with a Private Member's Motion (PMM) tabled by a member of the House of Clergy in the Diocese of Chester.

4.1.1 The 1980 Debate

9th JULY 1980 3.45pm

PRIVATE MEMBERS MOTIONS: RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER FAITHS⁵⁶⁴

MOTION PROPOSED *The Revd W. M. D. Persson (Chester)*

'That this Synod:

(i) Welcomes the opportunity provided by religious freedom in this country for the development of mutual understanding between Christians and those of other faiths.

(ii) Wishes to affirm, nevertheless, the unique character of the Incarnation, person and work of Christ in God's purpose of salvation.

⁵⁶⁴ RP 7/80 11/2, pp. 601-619.

CHAIR *The Archdeacon of Norwich (Ven. Timothy Dudley-Smith)*
 SPEAKERS *The Revd W. M. D. Persson (Chester) PROPOSER*
 Mr V. Menon (Chelmsford)
 The Bishop of Guildford (The Rt Revd David Brown) AMENDMENT
 The Archdeacon of Oxford (The Ven. C. Witton-Davies)
 The Revd M. E. Vickers (York)
 The Bishop of Leicester (The Rt Revd C.R. Rutt)
 Preb. F. A. Piachaud (London)
 Canon D. M. Knight (Chelmsford)
 Canon I. Smith-Cameron (Southwark)
 The Revd D. R. J. Holloway (Newcastle)
 Lt-Col. R. Y. Taylor (Gloucester)

(iii) Asks, therefore, that care should be taken over the ways in which the Church seeks to further inter-faith relationships.

(iv) Believes that Dialogue and common social endeavour are the normally appropriate means of furthering such relationships.

(v) Urges that adequate consideration should always be given to the need for clarity in the Church's testimony to the Gospel.'

AMENDMENT (NEGATIVED) *The Bishop of Guildford*
(Rt Revd David Brown)

'In part (ii), line 1, after "unique character" insert "and universal significance".'

The occasion for this Debate on a motion brought before Synod by a 'private member' was, once again, the concern felt about the growing number of interfaith services in Cathedrals, most recently in St Albans. Mr Menon, a Christian convert from Hinduism, whose speeches and amendment had left a considerable impression on Synod in the Debates of 1972 and 1973, supported the motion, because:

...of the wrong approach that we are beginning to see in certain parts of the country. Dialogue is not asking other faiths to come to cathedrals and churches to worship their own gods and read their own scriptures. This has happened in St Albans and it is beginning to happen elsewhere.⁵⁶⁵

Apparently, within seven years, the issues raised by a multi-faith society now confronted not only those citizens of the major immigrant cities of London, Leicester and Leeds-Bradford but they had moved onto the agenda of what one British sociologist called the 'white highlands'.⁵⁶⁶ The profile of Religious Pluralism in Britain had been raised considerably by 1980. At an ecclesial level, this was reflected first in the establishment of an ecumenical Committee for Relations with People of

⁵⁶⁵ RP 7/80 11/2, Mr V. Menon (*Chelmsford*), p.606.

⁵⁶⁶ Davie, G, *Religion in Britain since 1945* (Institute of Contemporary British History, London, 1994), p.43. Examples would be of the rural counties of Dorset, Devon and Cornwall.

Other Faiths,⁵⁶⁷ within the BCC; and then (within a few months) the establishment of the Church of England's equivalent, the IFCG of the Board for Mission and Unity.⁵⁶⁸

The creation of these new committees was not only a response to the increased profile of Religious Pluralism in Britain. The BCC was following the international lead of the WCC, which had been considering questions raised for Christians by Religious Pluralism for almost a decade. In January 1971 the theme selected for special attention at the meeting of the Central Committee of the WCC in Addis Ababa was *Dialogue with People of Living Faiths*.⁵⁶⁹ A Report entitled the *Interim Policy Statement and Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies*⁵⁷⁰ was received by the central committee and a subunit on 'Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies' was immediately established. Eight years later, after being debated at five important meetings,⁵⁷¹ the WCC central committee received the 'Chiang Mai theological policy statement' and adopted a set of Guidelines on Dialogue, which it recommended to the Churches for study and action.⁵⁷² Stanley

⁵⁶⁷ Hereafter, CRPOF.

⁵⁶⁸ IFCG established 1980.

⁵⁶⁹ WCC Assemblies are held every seven years. The central committee meets more frequently and functions as a policy-making body for the Council. See Samartha S., *Between Two Cultures: Ecumenical Ministry in a Pluralist World* (WCC, Geneva, 1996) p.70. The WCC was set up after the Second World War. Its first Assembly was held in 1948 in Amsterdam and attended by delegates of 147 Churches. The General Secretary was Visser't Hooft. Since then, an Assembly has been held every seven or eight years, when a Central Committee is elected to govern during the intervening years. The Commissions which make up the WCC are: Faith and Order, Justice, Peace and Creation, Education and Ecumenical Formation, Churches on International Affairs, World Mission and Evangelism, Youth. Other special Commissions are initiated when required, for example the Special Commission on Orthodox Participation in the WCC. The Roman Catholic Church is not a member of the WCC but send observers to all Central Committee meetings and Assemblies. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity nominates twelve members to the WCC Faith and Order Commission as full members.

⁵⁷⁰ 'It should be noted that the words "and Ideologies" were not in the original draft but were added by the central committee.' Samartha S., *Between Two Cultures: Ecumenical Ministry in a Pluralist World* (WCC, Geneva, 1996), p.71.

⁵⁷¹ Working Party Meetings: Athens, 1973; New Delhi, 1974; WCC Assembly: Nairobi, 1975; Multi-Lateral Dialogue: Colombo, 1974; Theological Consultation: Chiang Mai, 1977.

⁵⁷² *Guidelines on Dialogue* (WCC, Geneva, 1979). At this stage the Orthodox Church had become a full member (1961) and the Roman Catholic Church had representatives on all the main Commissions (for example, Faith and Order).

Samartha, Director of the subunit, noted that ‘The ecumenical movement could no longer consider other religions in a restricted *missiological* sense but had to deal with this issue *theologically*.’⁵⁷³ As we have seen in the Debates of the General Synod, the Church of England had already highlighted the difficulties of the relationship between Mission and the theological question of Salvation and Grace in other religions, for example with Lampe’s use of the Spirits amongst those of other faiths who are ‘not at present Christian.’⁵⁷⁴ However, this was the challenge to the member Churches of the WCC who then received the document in 1980.

The Church of England would debate the *Guidelines* in 1981,⁵⁷⁵ but the Revd W. Persson, a member of the BCC since 1977,⁵⁷⁶ already had them in mind when he drafted his Private Member's Motion:

If members read the World Council of Churches’ Guidelines on Dialogue, they will soon discover that the ideological thrust behind them is ‘Dialogue in Community’ ... It is suggested that Dialogue should proceed in terms of people of other faiths and ideologies, rather than of theoretical impersonal systems. This approach has much to commend it. It provides common ground. It encourages the development of mutual respect and understanding. It helps to banish fears and unwarranted attitudes of superiority.⁵⁷⁷

Coming as they do in the introduction to this Debate, the references to ‘common ground’, ‘mutual respect and understanding’ and the banishing of ‘fear’ and ‘superiority’, stand in contrast to comments from the 1972 Debate on redundant church buildings where the Debate opened with reference to the ‘very strong

⁵⁷³ Samartha, S. J., *Between Two Cultures: Ecumenical Ministry in a Pluralist World* (WCC, Geneva, 1996), p.80.

⁵⁷⁴ RP 2/73 4/1, Prof G. W. H. Lampe (*Cambridge*), p.195.

⁵⁷⁵ *Relations with People of other Faiths: Guidelines on Dialogue in Britain* (BCC, London, 1981). This was revised in 1983 and after selling 16,000 copies went out of print. It was then reprinted as *In Good Faith: The Four Principles of Interfaith Dialogue* (CCBI, London, 1991).

⁵⁷⁶ See *The Church of England Year Book* (1980), p.231 below.

⁵⁷⁷ RP 7/80 11/2, The Revd W. M. D. Persson (*Chester*), pp.602–3.

reactions' and 'deep distress' of parishioners.⁵⁷⁸ This change of approach seems to provide some evidence that Britain was beginning to understand itself as a religiously plural society. Interestingly, however, these affirmations of 'Dialogue in community' came from one who did not actually agree that the WCC *Guidelines* were an adequate summary of Dialogue:

Dialogue of this character is only half the equation. It too easily lacks a frame of reference, and, because of this, it will not necessarily provoke the most searching questions or challenge fundamental assumptions... the trouble is that we are hardly likely to be aware of our own presuppositions, unlikely to be aware of the possibilities of syncretism in our response, of the natural theology ... of the extent to which some modern theological assumptions about humanisation may have given our version of the Gospel a man-centred shift, of the way an unthought-out universalism may have influenced our understanding of the Holy Spirit ...⁵⁷⁹

Persson would not have disagreed with Stanley Samartha's call to deal with the issue *theologically*. His comments in this General Synod Debate show, rather, that the *theological frameworks* for 'considering other religions' might vary widely.

The Debate follows arguments for the motion on the one hand, and the arguments behind David Brown's amendment on the other. However, the fear that Dialogue was a betrayal of Mission was at the heart of this 1980 General Synod Debate. It was a fear that the emphasis on community relations would eventually obscure the need for proclamation and conversion. Persson articulated this as he introduced the motion:

The basic point is this. If in dialogue we are to be bound together in community, in that which is human about us, it is

⁵⁷⁸ RP 7/72 3/3, The Rt Revd E. Treacy (*Bishop of Wakefield*), pp.442–3.

⁵⁷⁹ RP 7/80 11/2, The Revd W. M. D. Persson (*Chester*), p.603.

also necessary that from our end of the dialogue we share what is characteristically Christian about our faith.⁵⁸⁰

Further, if in our dialoguing we have insufficient to affirm, if our presentation is not anchored to the empirical historical event of God's unique disclosure in the Incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ, it will not be Christianity to which we are bearing witness. It will only be to a subjective experience which is authentic for us but relative in its connection with truth and reality.⁵⁸¹

Subjective experience as the dangerous root of relativism was a link that had already been made in the February 1973 Debate on 'Holiness': it was something which deeply unsettled those for whom the 'Truth' of Christianity was an absolute, rooted in an empirical historical event. This reaction was defined by a profound distrust of anything that would 'confuse' the 'clear message' of the Gospel.⁵⁸² Thus, those who supported this PMM of 1980 did so because it was 'positive and clear', because it affirmed 'the uniqueness of Christ amid all the wishy-washy talk that we hear' and because 'our temptation as Christians is to love in the easiest way rather than in the truest way, and our weakness in Dialogue shows when we are least ready to be clear.'⁵⁸³

Persson's motion affirmed the 'unique character of the Incarnation, person and work of Christ in God's purpose of salvation' and in his introductory speech he said:

We shall affirm the costly truth that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and that there is salvation in no one else, and we shall affirm it as men and women who come to him with empty hands. The truth is more than a couple of proof texts lifted out of context and it is a truth of universal significance, but the necessity of these statements lies in the uniqueness of Christ

⁵⁸⁰ *RP 7/80 11/2*, The Revd W. M. D. Persson (*Chester*), p.604.

⁵⁸¹ *RP 7/80 11/2*, The Revd W. M. D. Persson (*Chester*), p.603.

⁵⁸² So, for example, Prof. J. N. D. Anderson *RP 2/73 4/1*, p.203.

⁵⁸³ *RP 7/80 11/2*, Mr V. Menon (*Chelmsford*), p.605 and The Rt Revd C. R. Rutt (*Bishop of Leicester*), p.612, respectively.

and what universal significance we derive from these statements is only contingent upon that necessity.⁵⁸⁴

This last point about the universal significance is in reply to David Brown's amendment to add 'and universal significance' to Persson's motion, which the Synod would reject. Race saw this tension between 'unique' and 'universal' as one of the defining differences between exclusivism and inclusivism. But what Brown was trying to do by widening the motion to include 'universal' was to bring in the work of the Spirit as well as the emphasis on the Incarnation. In 1991, the Doctrine Commission would publish a Report called 'We Believe in the Spirit' which would state their conviction that 'the Spirit, though particularly at work within the Christian Church by covenant and promise, is also at work outside it, in the lives and characters of people of other faiths and no faith.'⁵⁸⁵ The 1995 Doctrine Commission Report 'The Mystery of Salvation' would go on to consider the two traditional approaches to Salvation history whilst proposing a 'middle way'; believing that they could reframe the question 'in the light of an ongoing Dialogue with contemporary culture' and 'perhaps point towards new ways of articulating an alternative to the exclusivity and inclusivity of the alternate routes.'⁵⁸⁶ However, in the 1980 Debate, Persson and others were anxious to restate the exclusivism of Salvation through the Incarnation and perhaps if it is remembered, that the theological context of this Debate was the

⁵⁸⁴ *RP 7/80 11/2*, The Revd W. M. D. Persson (*Chester*), pp. 603–4.

⁵⁸⁵ *We Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Church House Publishing, London, 1991), p.141. This Report is another example of how theology in the Church of England is always set in the context of real, practical issues. So, the members of the 1986–9 Doctrine Commission write: "In our attitudes to baptism we need to take seriously that strange paradox of English religion, namely the very high proportion of the population who say their prayers every day, including the Lord's Prayer, and yet seldom come to church...In short, there just is no escaping the sociological factors which contribute to belief; thus, in understanding this point, with regard to infant baptism we only make explicit what is implicit in all life." (pp.191–2). This naturally leads to a discussion about grace, but the emphasis is not a systematic discussion of the scope and extent of God's grace outside the Church, rather the emphasis is on how 'the Holy Spirit makes us children of God' (p.193). This is the natural extrapolation of a theology discovered through prayer and liturgy.

⁵⁸⁶ *The Mystery of Salvation* (Church House Publishing, London, 1995), pp.335–41.

high-profile discussion raised by the 1977 publication of *The Myth of God Incarnate*, it is not surprising that this was the case.

Recognising that this General Synod Debate was also concerned with the definition of the concept of 'Dialogue', Brown represented a section of Synod who had begun to make their voices heard in 1973: those who wished to affirm the importance of the Incarnation but who believed that, in Christians' relationships with those of other faith communities, the theology of *solus Christus* would prove restrictive unless it always be understood within the context of the universal love of God:⁵⁸⁷

I wish always to affirm the unique character of the Incarnation, the crucifixion and the resurrection. It was the totally unique act of grace in which the external word became intrinsically part of the life of the created universe – totally unique, I agree entirely; but we do not, I think, do justice to the wonder of that act of grace if we simply emphasise its uniqueness without at the same time emphasising that it is of universal significance for the whole life of man. I would put that first in theological terms because, although utterly unique, this act of grace was one which has totally changed the relationship of the created universe with God. God became man, part of the whole living stream of humanity, and in that sense the Incarnation touches already the whole life of humanity and is therefore universal in its significance and its relationship with man's life. If we think of the act of Atonement, of course it was totally unique, in history the one perfect sacrifice made for the sin of the world, but the Revelation in history of the eternal timeless atoning love of God ... Therefore, the very Atonement itself, although it may be the unique act of grace, is yet the outpouring of the universal love of the eternal God for his creation.⁵⁸⁸

In Race's three-fold typology, as we have seen, inclusivism is identified on the basis of its commitment to two equally binding convictions: the universal will of God to

⁵⁸⁷ See, for example, *RP* 7/72 3/3, The Revd Smith-Cameron (*Southwark*), p.451. Rt Revd David Brown was educated at the School of Oriental and African Sciences and after being ordained in 1949 became a missionary with CMS in Sudan, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. He was Bishop of Guildford from 1973 until his death, aged 60, in 1982.

⁵⁸⁸ *RP* 7/80 11/2, The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), pp.607–8.

save and the uniqueness of the Revelation in Christ and as such, Brown's position in the 1980 Debate can be identified as inclusivist. However, Race also makes it clear that there are different emphases within inclusivism and that while Rahner (for example) 'emphasises the continuity in God's universal will to save', 'De Lubac and others emphasise the need for conversion to Christ'⁵⁸⁹ and it is in this area that the boundaries between inclusivism and pluralism become less clear. There was also the suggestion that other faiths might be seen as vehicles of Salvation and not as a hindrance to it.⁵⁹⁰ Brown argued that his theological emphasis demonstrated that the concept of Dialogue was a vital part of the process of Mission; (thereby hoping also to address the fears of those who felt that 'Dialogue' was intended to replace witness and conversion):

'[There are] two parameters within which Dialogue must be conducted: witness, on the one hand, to Christ's uniqueness, but, on the other hand, exploration into the many countless ways in which that unique word is echoed in the whole life of the universe, and the urgent task of bringing the whole diverse life of the universe into an intimate living relationship with Christ which has already been affirmed in the Incarnation.'

I hope that Synod will accept [the amendment] on the grounds of mission. The affirmation of the Incarnation simply as a unique act has in the past made Christians curiously insensitive to the other ways in which God has made himself known to mankind ... Christians have for many years been strangely contemptuous of the experience of God's grace which surrounds all human people and which therefore has been given in some ways to others in other religions ...

These, I believe, are the two parameters within which Dialogue must be conducted: witness, on the one hand, to Christ's uniqueness, but, on the other hand, exploration into the many countless ways in which that unique word is echoed in the whole life of the universe, and the urgent task of bringing the

⁵⁸⁹ Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.54.

⁵⁹⁰ RP 7/73 4/2 The Revd H. W. F. Bishop (*Chairman, Race Relations Unit, BCC – Religious Communities – Province of York*), p.350.

whole diverse life of the universe into an intimate living relationship with Christ which has already been affirmed in the Incarnation.⁵⁹¹

What this conclusion demonstrates, however, is that Brown had not recognised the strength of members' desire for 'clarity' on the principle of *solus Christus* which (as has already been noted in the Debates of the 1970s) was at the heart of the Debate for those concerned with Mission as proclamation. His references to 'all mankind' and 'the whole diverse life of the universe' were enough to sow a seed of doubt in the minds of those voting for the motion. Persson had already voiced his suspicion of 'natural theology', 'humanisation' which had given the 'Gospel a man-centred shift' and 'unthought-out universalism'.⁵⁹² The fear of a disintegration or dilution of the Gospel, raised by the increasing influence of modernity and secularism can be seen in Brown's failure to pass an amendment which would widen the 'unique character' of Jesus to include His 'universal significance'.⁵⁹³ This is the first time the *theological* boundaries were so clearly drawn in a Debate and the discussions I have highlighted so far are between the exclusivist and inclusivist perspective. However, there was also evidence in 1980 of what Race would come to define as 'pluralism', that is to say, a theological perspective which uses the relativism of modernity as a way of harmonising the conflicting truth claims of the world religions by suggesting a common salvific process. We have already seen that there were those who, in the Debates of the 1970s, believed that subjective experience was the only honest context in which to understand the Gospel.⁵⁹⁴ Now, in 1980 Smith-Cameron said:

... Christ as the great sacrament of God, mediating God in all his divine glory to the entire created order, including as it does all men everywhere and at all times. Christ is not limited to

⁵⁹¹ *RP 7/80 11/2*, The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), pp.607–8.

⁵⁹² *RP 7/80 11/2*, The Revd W. M. D. Persson (*Chester*), p.603.

⁵⁹³ For exact wording see (earlier) p. 216.

⁵⁹⁴ So, for example, *RP 7/72 3/3*, The Revd I. Smith-Cameron (*Southwark*), p.451.

Christianity. I personally veer to the view that God's grace in Christ reaches such men and women through their ancestral religions and not despite them. As I understand it, the New Testament claim only in Jesus Christ is not that God is only to be found in Jesus and nowhere else; rather it is that the only God is to be found anywhere, though he is to be found everywhere, for his centre is nowhere and his circumference everywhere.⁵⁹⁵

Here, Smith-Cameron rejects 'an excessive Jesuolatry'⁵⁹⁶ in favour of an emphasis on God; and thus a Christological perspective is replaced by a *theistic* perspective. Of course it is not possible to identify a fully developed theological position from the text of a brief speech in Synod; but one cannot help but notice the echoes here of John Hick's famous rallying cry for a 'Copernican revolution' in the Theology of Religious Pluralism.⁵⁹⁷ To remind ourselves of the point made in Chapter 1, in *The Myth of God Incarnate*, in 1977, Hick had argued that it was God, not Christ nor even Christianity, towards whom all religion is moving and from whom all religions gain their Salvation. He therefore proposed a *theo-centric* revolution away from the *Christo-centric* or *ecclesio-centric* position that has dominated Christian history.⁵⁹⁸ This approach was later identified by Alan Race as 'pluralist'.⁵⁹⁹ In this Debate of 1980 it is possible, then, to identify evidence of all three of Race's categories, albeit in nascent (and in the case of pluralism, limited) form. What strikes the reader of this Debate is not an immediate clarity of theological position, so much as the emerging boundaries which the Debate itself was producing as it progressed, although pluralism here is a minority voice. So, although the views of Smith-Cameron were expressed in

⁵⁹⁵ RP 7/80 11/2, The Revd I. Smith-Cameron (*Southwark*), p.615.

⁵⁹⁶ RP 7/80 11/2, The Revd I. Smith-Cameron (*Southwark*), p.615.

⁵⁹⁷ Hick adapted this phrase in his book *The Myth of God Incarnate* (SCM, London, 1977), taken from Bishop John Robinson's 1963 publication *Honest to God*, and applied it to the Debate on Religious Pluralism. Hick was a member of the United Reformed Church until 2009, when he was accepted into the Society of Friends (Quakers).

⁵⁹⁸ Hick, J, *God and the Universe of Faiths: Essays in the Philosophy of Religion* (Macmillan, London, 1977). See particularly pp.121–2.

⁵⁹⁹ Race, A, *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.84ff.

support of Brown's amendment, these views may have contributed to its downfall. The voice of pluralism is present in the General Synod Debates but it seems to chime too closely with the Liberal Academic Debate of the time, which so many members of General Synod were anxious about. Certainly, the next speaker makes the line of discontinuity between Christ and other religions quite clear:

The theological point for me hinges on the question; does the uniqueness of Christ have an exclusive meaning as well as, which we all believe, an inclusive meaning? Put more simply, does the confession 'I believe in Jesus Christ' by itself imply any or no criticism of other faiths? Is being a Christian compatible with saying that other religions are capable of being a sufficient vehicle of the unique Christ, or is the Christian gospel the only sufficient vehicle for conveying the unique Christ to the world? However positive in some respects, and indeed in many respects, other faiths may be, in the last analysis they fail at being a sufficient vehicle for conveying Jesus Christ to the world.⁶⁰⁰

Thus Holloway recognises as something 'which we all believe', the 'inclusive meaning' of Christ. He was responding to Brown's speech in favour of his amendment, so he appears to be accepting the very clear lines of inclusivism which Brown has drawn. Yet Holloway is a well-known evangelical, whose perspective is essentially exclusivist and wants to make the point here that the uniqueness of Christ has an *exclusive* meaning. This speech is part of the evidence for the overall picture of exclusive-inclusivism which I am suggesting is characteristic of Anglican Theology. Of course, from Holloway's perspective it would appear to be an inclusive-*exclusivism*. However, my argument is that his telling phrase 'which we all believe' is what is fundamentally distinctive of Anglican Theology because it springs from the 'common ground' and 'mutual respect and understanding' with which Persson opened the Debate. This, in turn, leads to recognition of what is good and holy in other faiths,

⁶⁰⁰ RP 7/80 The Revd D. R. J. Holloway (*Newcastle*), p.616.

which theologically leads to the possibility of revelation in other faiths. It is the inclusivism born of Establishment and it cannot be ignored by exclusivists. Thus exclusivism in the Church of England is always tempered by the need to consider the *pastoral* questions which being a National Church engenders. So, Persson again:

... how far is it right to share in worship and to pray with others who would not wish it to be suggested that their prayer and worship was in the name of Christ? ... how do we react to the increasing patterns of such worship in schools? Do we or do we not believe it to be our business to seek the conversion of those of other faiths to Christianity? How far are we taking into consideration that large majority in our society who are not members of these other faiths and whose understanding of the person and work of Christ remains vague, to say the least?⁶⁰¹

Provided that the uniqueness of Christ is in no way qualified, there is plenty of elaboration called for. There is the question of the extent to which that uniqueness is interpreted in inclusive or exclusive terms. There needs to be a continuing exploration of the relationship between God's action in creation and his action in redemption, and how far between creation and redemption there is continuity and discontinuity, and there is no doubt also that affirmations with a Christian content require a Trinitarian context.⁶⁰²

Of interest here is the reference to 'a Trinitarian context', with its echoes of the 1972 Debate.⁶⁰³ In referring to the necessity of a Trinitarian context, Persson's speech foreshadowed an approach which would become increasingly important in the wider theological Debate on Religious Pluralism. Within a decade the WCC would pioneer the theological recovery of the 'Spirit' as it strengthened links with the Orthodox Churches.⁶⁰⁴ This emphasis would be echoed both in the work of theologians and in

⁶⁰¹ *RP* 7/80 11/2, The Revd W. M. D. Persson (*Chester*), p.604.

⁶⁰² *RP* 7/80 11/2, The Revd W. M. D. Persson (*Chester*), p.604.

⁶⁰³ *RP* 7/72 3/3, pp.451, 446.

⁶⁰⁴ The 1991 Assembly in Canberra was called 'Come Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation'.

Reports published by the Church of England's Board for Mission and Unity/IFCG and Doctrine Commission.⁶⁰⁵

However, in the General Synod of 1980, in a PMM, the 'frame of reference' referred to by Persson at the outset of the Debate is quite clearly that of Mission, as it had been in the 1970s. Of course, Brown, as Chairman of the BMU, also had Mission in mind. The difference between the two approaches seems to have been, once again, the importance of the role of proclamation and conversion. That is, the extent to which other religions in themselves can be said to be part of God's universal will to save and the necessity of bringing people of other faiths to explicit faith in Christ. These matters had been touched upon in the Debates about redundant church buildings, and form the background to this Debate in 1980. But as I have tried to show in these Debates, the arguments about clarity of definition are, in fact, indicative of some important differences of theological emphases. In 1980 it was with Mission in mind that the Chairman of the BMU's amendment was defeated:

In the abstract the amendment is a true proposition, I believe,
but in terms at this point of encouraging a sensitive but positive

⁶⁰⁵ The first major work of the IFCG, *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* (Church House Publishing, London, 1984), opened with a prayer of dedication to 'The Freedom of the Spirit'. It later included a section on 'God as Spirit', outlining the present debate on the 'Filioque clause' between the Eastern and Western Churches (p.20) and then mentioning briefly the concept of 'the Spirit beyond the Church' (p.21). In 1986, Gavin D'Costa was among the earliest of the theologians to suggest the importance of the Trinitarian context for the debate on Religious Pluralism (see final chapter in *Theology and Religious Pluralism* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1986)). The series of three Doctrine Commission Reports on questions of faith by the Church of England (*We Believe in God*, 1987, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1991, and *The Mystery of Salvation*, 1996) all emphasised the Trinitarian nature of God. See particularly *The Mystery of Salvation* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996) pp.171–3. By the 1990s this Trinitarian Theology of Religious Pluralism is more developed (the Doctrine Commission's 1991 report was the best example of this in the Church of England); and there is increasing evidence of theologians wanting to use pneumatology to overcome the traditional divisions of 'exclusivist', 'inclusivist' and 'pluralist'. So, Knitter, P., 'A New Pentecost?' *Current Dialogue* 21 (1991) pp.24–37. (see p.35 for particular reference to this), and Smart and Konstantine *Christian Systematic Theology in a World Context*, also published in 1991. The Doctrine Commission report of 1996 follows this lead (see pp.171–3) but does not develop it (see my criticism of this in *Theology* 9/1996, pp.371–2). By 1997 Jacques Dupuis offers a comprehensive and systematic Trinitarian Christology in *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Orbis, New York, 1997).

witness to Jesus Christ, I believe that we owe it to people of other faiths and of no faiths to make a clear statement, and for this reason I think that the amendment would be counter-productive.⁶⁰⁶

This Debate of 1980, in advance of any discussion about ‘Dialogue’, stated that the mind of Synod believed Dialogue to be only one *element* of Mission; that the role of Mission itself was proclamation and that Mission and not Dialogue should be the basis of relationships with other faiths. As I have shown in Chapter 1, it is clear that each of the ‘types’ in the three-fold paradigm has their own understanding of Mission. For the exclusivist it is about proclamation and conversion, bringing the person to *fides ex auditu*. For the inclusivist there is a stronger emphasis on listening in order to discern Christ in other religions and only then to offer to name Christ as the Reality or Truth that is anonymously present in other religions. For the pluralist, Mission is always best understood as Dialogue because it is a common quest for Ultimate Truth. These different approaches are at the heart of the discussion in this Debate.

4.1.2 The Outcome of the 1980 Debate

AMENDMENT (NEGATIVED) *The Bishop of Guildford*
(Rt Revd David Brown)

‘In part (ii), line 1, after “unique character” insert “and universal significance”.’

MOTION CARRIED

‘That this Synod:

- (i) Welcomes the opportunity provided by religious freedom in this country for the development of mutual understanding between Christians and those of other faiths.
- (ii) Wishes to affirm, nevertheless, the unique character of the Incarnation, person and work of Christ in God’s purpose of salvation.

⁶⁰⁶ RP 7/80 11/2, The Revd D. R. J. Holloway (*Newcastle*), p.616.

- (iii) Asks, therefore, that care should be taken over the ways in which the Church seeks to further inter-faith relationships.
- (iv) Believes that Dialogue and common social endeavour are the normally appropriate means of furthering such relationships.
- (v) Urges that adequate consideration should always be given to the need for clarity in the Church's testimony to the Gospel.'

4.2 The 1981 Debate

I have already mentioned, at the beginning of this chapter, that there had been significant demographic and sociological changes between 1973 and 1980. Practical Theology has always made use of the social sciences and as I am suggesting that Anglican Theology is Practical Theology it is necessary to note that the social context for this Debate of 1981 were the riots of Brixton and Toxteth. Brixton in south London and Toxteth in Liverpool were areas of deep social and economic problems – high unemployment, high crime, poor housing, no amenities – in predominantly black communities. The police at the time had been given powers to stop and search anyone under the 'Sus Law'. Unrest spread throughout Britain during 1981 and there were incidents of rioting in Handsworth, Southall, Moss Side, Leeds, Leicester, Southampton, Halifax, Bedford, Gloucester, Coventry, Bristol and Edinburgh. The public enquiry into the riots at Brixton was headed by Lord Scarman, who published the Scarman Report in November 1981, just as Synod was debating 'Relations with People of Other Faiths'. The riots had more to do with poverty and unemployment than faith, but they happened in black and Asian areas of the country and raised the profile of the 'other' in what Grace Davie has called 'the white highlands', or the particularly rural counties like Devon or Cumbria.

The occasion for this Debate in the third Group of Sessions (November) 1981, was a Report which included a commentary by the Church of England's BMU on the ecumenical BCC document, *Guidelines on Dialogue in Britain*.⁶⁰⁷ In itself, the BCC document was a conflation, into four fundamental principles, of the thirteen guidelines distributed by the WCC in 1979.⁶⁰⁸ These four were that: "Dialogue begins when people meet each other, that Dialogue depends on mutual understanding and mutual trust, that Dialogue makes it possible to share in service to the community and that Dialogue becomes the medium for authentic witness."⁶⁰⁹

4.2.1 The Debate

11th NOVEMBER 1981 3.10pm

RELATIONS WITH PEOPLE OF OTHER FAITHS – A REPORT BY THE BOARD FOR MISSION AND UNITY (GS 504)⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁷ *Relations with People of other Faiths: Guidelines on Dialogue in Britain* (BCC, London, 1981).

⁶⁰⁸ 1. Churches should seek ways in which Christian communities can enter into Dialogue with their neighbours of different faiths and ideologies. 2. Dialogues should normally be planned together. 3. Partners in Dialogue should take stock of the religious, cultural and ideological diversity of their local situation. 4. Partners in Dialogue should be free to 'define themselves'. 5. Dialogue should generate educational efforts in the community. 6. Dialogue is most vital when its participants actually share their lives together. 7. Dialogue should be pursued by sharing in common enterprises in community. 8. Partners in Dialogue should be aware of their ideological commitments. 9. Partners in Dialogue should be aware of cultural loyalties. 10. Dialogue will raise the question of sharing in celebrations, rituals, worship and meditation. 11. Dialogue should be planned and undertaken ecumenically, wherever possible. 12. Planning for Dialogue will necessitate regional and local guidelines. 13. Dialogue can be helped by selective participation in world interreligious meetings and organisations.

⁶⁰⁹ *Relations with People of other Faiths: Guidelines on Dialogue in Britain* (BCC, London, 1981), taken from the Contents page, p.iii.

⁶¹⁰ *RP 11/81 12/3*, pp.1018–1048.

CHAIR *The Revd J. C. Broadhurst (London)*

SPEAKERS *The Bishop of Guildford (The Rt Revd David Brown) PROPOSER*

The Revd W. M. D. Persson (Chester)

Mr V. Menon (Chelmsford)

Mr M. D. L. George (Sheffield)

Preb. J. H. Ginever (Lichfield)

Mrs V. E. Fisher (Blackburn)

The Bishop of Southwark (The Rt Revd R. O. Bowlby) Chairman, Hospital Chaplaincies Council

The Revd D. R. J. Holloway (Newcastle)

Mrs J. M. Mayland (Sheffield)

The Bishop of Ripon (The Rt Revd D. N. de L. Young) Chairman, Consultants on Inter-Faith Relations

The Archdeacon of Bradford (The Ven. F. P. Sargeant)

The Bishop of Bristol (The Rt Revd E. J. T. Tinsley)

MOTION PROPOSED *Rt Revd David Brown (Bishop of Guildford)*

‘That this Report be received.’

MOTION PROPOSED *Rt Revd David Brown (Bishop of Guildford)*

‘That this Synod commends the four principles of the British Council of Churches’ Report *Guidelines on Dialogue in Britain*, to the Dioceses as a guide for action.’

AMENDMENT *Mr H. Gracey (Guildford)*

‘Add at end:

“and asks the Board for Mission and Unity to bring forward a further report on the theological aspects of Dialogue in due course”.’

I have already noted in this thesis that in the matter of authorship of all the Reports written for the Church of England (including the Doctrine Commission Reports), members were drawn from a wide range of traditions within the Church of England. My argument has been that while this often led to problems in achieving a consensus it also provided the Refiner’s Fire of discussion and debate which is part of the theology of mutual correction. In 1981, the Chairman of the BMU, David Brown, introduced this Report to Synod and opened the Debate by saying:

the Report had the unanimous support of the Committee who included representatives of a wide range of Churches and traditions, and I mention particularly the Roman Catholic and Church of Scotland representatives, and the Evangelicals.⁶¹¹

In a manner reminiscent of Lampe in 1973, Brown referred first to the PMM Debate of the previous year and then said that he hoped that by speaking ‘now mainly about

The Revd E. G. Stride (London)

Mr J. D. Walker (Exeter)

The Bishop of Guildford (The Rt Revd David Brown) PROPOSER

Mr H. Gracey (Guildford) AMENDMENT

Dr J. W. Lethbridge (Chester)

Miss R. C. Howard (York)

The Bishop of Birmingham The (Rt Revd H. W. Montifiore)

⁶¹¹ *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), p.1020.

the practice of Dialogue', '[we shall] not go over the same ground again.'⁶¹² He thus opened the Debate by making a clear distinction between the *theology* of Dialogue and the *practice* of Dialogue. In his opinion 'our debate today is about the stance which religious people in Britain need to adopt towards each other as they share in the quest for a just and harmonious society... It is about working together for justice and peace.'⁶¹³

This refers back to the emphasis in the WCC document on 'community relations' to which Persson's PMM was objecting. When considering the relationship between Dialogue and Mission, it was clear from Brown's introduction that he believed the latter to depend on the former. This was a clear difference with the 1980 Debate where I have suggested that it was apparent that the General Synod believed Dialogue to be *one element* of Mission and Mission to be the proper basis of Christians' relationship with other faiths. But for Brown, testimony, witness and the international context were what pointed to the praxis of Dialogue as the essential basic framework for Mission. Dialogue 'is about learning to stand where others stand, in a sympathy which is itself a testimony to the Gospel...It is about sharing our convictions with others.'⁶¹⁴ Listening as the starting point of Mission is what Race identified as the inclusivist perspective (although there is nothing that precludes this methodology being incorporated into exclusivism). Certainly, from everything Brown has said so far, it seems reasonable to identify him as an inclusivist. Brown reinforced his point about listening as an essential part of Mission with reference to the international context of the Debate:

⁶¹² RP 11/81 12/3, The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), p.1018.

⁶¹³ RP 11/81 12/3, The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), p.1018.

⁶¹⁴ RP 11/81 12/3, The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), p.1018.

... the development of a praxis of Dialogue in the World Council of Churches during the past two decades is the result of a new and revived concern for mission by Churches in the Middle East, in Asia, and in Africa. In circumstances where Christians do not have a majority status within a society or a culture, the only way in which to speak effectively about the lordship of Christ is by building relationships with others on the lines suggested by the WCC guidelines.⁶¹⁵

On the continents mentioned by Brown, 'reflection on the nature of their relationships with other faiths' was not a 'luxury', but 'an urgent and everyday preoccupation.'⁶¹⁶ Indeed, he felt that this urgency was not confined to the international churches. Their experience offered Britain a lesson which should be learnt today:

How to build just and harmonious societies, in which people of different cultures and different religions participate on a basis of mutual respect and mutual trust, has become for our generation a universal problem. It underlines many of the major issues of our time. It is also an urgent problem for Britain today; it will become even more urgent as the inner cities continue to decay, as people of Asian background gain confidence to claim their rightful share in civic and parliamentary life, as the proportion of Asian children in schools continues to rise, and their young people find themselves disadvantaged in the search for employment. The Church of England, as the Established Church, has a particular responsibility to wrestle with these problems.⁶¹⁷

Brown had already made the distinction between the theology and practice of Dialogue. From the quotation above, it is apparent that he believed the motivation for the practice of Dialogue was the responsibility of the Church of England, as National Church. This emphasis on justice and peace becomes – in the context of the General Synod of the Church of England – an extrapolation of the belief in the responsibility of a National Church for its citizens. However, the theological background to it can be

⁶¹⁵ *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), p.1019.

⁶¹⁶ *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), p.1019.

⁶¹⁷ *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), p.1019.

understood as a particular preoccupation of the WCC subunit on Dialogue with Living Faiths and Ideologies. Its Director, Stanley Samartha, had described his own conviction that the attitude of the religions of the world to one another *can* have an impact on violence and war, and not only on that generated by religious fundamentalism.⁶¹⁸ He had traced the concern which the subunit had with justice and peace during the 1970s to the political and economic background of the 1960s: the Arab-Israeli War, the Cold War, the War in Vietnam and the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops. As we have already seen, his intention was to consider the other religions not in 'a restricted *missiological* sense', but *theologically*:

[The question] ... was not how to *replace* other religions by Christianity, but how to *relate* the living faith of Christians to the living faiths of other people in a pluralistic world. The question was more theological than missiological: how could those who had so far been regarded as *objects* of Christian mission instead be seen as *partners* in a global community confronting urgent issues of peace, justice and the survival of life in the cosmos?⁶¹⁹

One can see from this quotation that Samartha does not separate theology and praxis in relation to Dialogue, as Brown had done when opening the Debate in 1981. Indeed, the inference here seems to be that it is the praxis that informs the theology of 'Dialogue'. Likewise, I have suggested that praxis and theology are inevitably and inextricably linked in the Church of England and that this division of the two is a *false* division. The problem for those who had defeated the 'watering-down' amendment the year before, was that both 'Mission' and 'Dialogue' were being defined in the context of community relations and not in the context of proclamation and Salvation:

⁶¹⁸ Samartha, S. J., *Between two cultures: ecumenical ministry in a pluralist world* (WCC, Geneva, 1996), pp.160ff. And see also my review of this book in *Theological Book Review*, 11/3 (June, 1999), pp.55–6.

⁶¹⁹ Samartha S. J., *Between two cultures: ecumenical ministry in a pluralist world* (WCC, Geneva, 1996), p.64.

But there can be other more understandable grounds for Christian reluctance. Some people may genuinely not feel equipped for encounter. Others may wonder if they are not involved in something that is actually wrong. To get entangled with other cultures in which the religious content is such a pervasive element running through the life of the minority community may seem to them to be a betrayal of their faith.⁶²⁰

It is apparent, from his introductory speech in 1981, that Brown was quite aware of the fears of those in Synod who wanted 'clarity not charity'.⁶²¹ The previous quotations show that he wanted to reassure members of Synod that the WCC agenda was still one of Mission,⁶²² and that 'Dialogue is in no way a threat to the glorious truths of the Christian Gospel.'⁶²³ Brown referred to J. V. Taylor when he said that 'real Dialogue is only possible between people who are convinced of the truth of what they believe and who feel compelled to share it with the world.'⁶²⁴ He explained, however, the reality faced by the WCC which was that an emphasis on the clarity of the Gospel had too often, in the past, resulted not in conversions, but distrust and even a legacy of violence.⁶²⁵ With fourteen years' experience in the Mission field, eight of which were in the bitterly divided country of Sudan, Brown knew this first-hand. His argument was that the emphasis on proclamation was not misplaced but that it could only be truly effective if it was conducted *in the context of* Dialogue; because 'Dialogue gives opportunities for authentic witness' (last of the 'Four Principles').

⁶²⁰ *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Revd W. M. D. Persson (*Chester*), p.1022.

⁶²¹ A phrase used by Professor Anderson in the debate of 1973. See *RP 2/73*, p.203.

⁶²² Albeit a dramatically less 'restricted' concept of Mission. See previous paragraph on the 'pluralist' agenda of the subunit on Dialogue. The divided opinions of the General Synod on the subject of 'Dialogue' and mission is, in fact, an accurate reflection of the theological divisions within the WCC on this subject. These were felt most profoundly at the fifth WCC Assembly in Nairobi, 1975. It is interesting to read the account of the debate in General Synod, the following year, on the *Report by the Church of England Representatives to the Assembly of the World Council of Churches* (GS 285): *RP 2/76 7/2*, pp.366–388.

⁶²³ *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), p.1018.

⁶²⁴ *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), p.1021.

⁶²⁵ *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), p.1021.

However, I would contend that this is evidence of the fact there is no division between praxis and theology, but rather an organic relationship.

What Brown's speech illustrates, however, is that the initial separation of the 'practice' of Dialogue from its 'theology' allowed a particular emphasis on the social and moral implications of Dialogue. As one might expect from someone who believed the 'theological' issues to have been 'covered' in the previous Debate, there are a great many references to 'justice', 'peace', 'responsibility' and 'harmonious relations', some explanation of the importance of these for Mission but very little reference to Christ, or the Bible. His critics were less able than he to separate these 'practical' elements from Christian theology and make a point which I am suggesting is essentially Anglican:

... I want to question any implication that theological engagement can be divorced from Christian practical action, for the result of doing so is serious damage in both directions.⁶²⁶

I do not need to be convinced at all by the report that Dialogue is vital; but I do not believe that we can do what the report tries to persuade us to do and that is to treat lightly the whole business of Dialogue at a religious level.⁶²⁷

I think that the mistrust that some of us feel has come largely because of the construction of Dialogue. I feel that the BCC has little understanding of how Synod works ... when it puts the Bible studies at the back, and we are asked to come here and talk about principles.⁶²⁸

It is my belief that for Christians, theology and action cannot be divorced.⁶²⁹

Looking once again at the Four Principles with the same critical eyes as many members of General Synod, one notices that – as a summary or definition of Dialogue

⁶²⁶ *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Revd W. M. D. Persson (*Chester*), p.1023.

⁶²⁷ *RP 11/81 12/3*, Preb. J. Ginever (*Lichfield*), p.1028.

⁶²⁸ *RP 11/81 12/3*, Mrs V. Fisher (*Blackburn*), p.1030.

⁶²⁹ *RP 11/81 12/3*, Revd W. M. D. Persson (*Chester*), p.1023.

– there is nothing specifically ‘Christian’ about them.⁶³⁰ The Christian imperative which is behind the call to ‘Dialogue’ is not explicit in this summary, and it is true that the biblical rationale for Dialogue is put at the back of the Report.⁶³¹ The imperative and rationale behind the Report does appear to be ‘community relations’; as underlined in Brown’s opening speech, ‘Hope and faith are not limited to Christians, and the Four Principles set out in the BCC report are just as important for Muslims or Hindus to adopt as for Christians.’⁶³² It is this that the members of Synod, quoted above, were objecting to, because it confirmed their basic fear that ‘Dialogue’ was set to dramatically reorientate Mission in a way which they felt would ‘water down’ the impact of Mission. Persson’s speech succinctly summarised the position these members might have preferred to see when he said:

As the Bishop of Guildford has pointed out, this Dialogue involves those of other faiths as well as ourselves. Dialogue is not a one-way process. But to Christians such Dialogue is not only a question of humanity; it is a question of necessity. It is part of our understanding of the Gospel. It is part of our becoming all things to all men. It is an expression of Christ’s incarnate purpose through our witness. And if it is humanly necessary, it is also urgent.⁶³³

The concern of those writing the BCC Report, reflected in some of the speeches made in its support,⁶³⁴ was that ‘conviction’ could mean ‘talking not listening’ and that the proclamation of Christ had often meant un-Christ-like behaviour. For this reason the BCC preferred to put ‘Dialogue’ in the context of a common morality and code of ethics, which could be developed into a shared ‘praxis’ of communication and action.

⁶³⁰ 1. Dialogue begins when people meet each other; 2. Dialogue depends on mutual understanding and mutual trust; 3. Dialogue makes it possible to share in service to the community; 4. Dialogue becomes the medium for authentic witness.

⁶³¹ *Relations with People of Other Faiths* (GS 504), Section 9 (section 10 is the conclusion), pp.19–20.

⁶³² *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), pp.1018–9.

⁶³³ *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Revd W. M. D. Persson (*Chester*), p.1022.

⁶³⁴ For example, see the speech *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Rt Revd R. O. Bowlby (*Bishop of Southwark*), pp.1031–4.

Hence the use of terms such as ‘fellow pilgrims’,⁶³⁵ and an emphasis on ‘listening’ as ‘the prerequisite of being heard’.⁶³⁶ This was developed further by suggesting that Dialogue was about ‘listening by both sides to each other’s witness’ and that ‘understanding of all that God did in the world’ can be ‘immensely enriched by seeking to enter into real relationships with other people of other faiths’ from whom it is possible to learn ‘a great deal about Christ himself.’⁶³⁷ In so doing, however, (as hinted at in the objections raised by some members of Synod) they were in fact offering a significantly different Theology of Religious Pluralism. Without the reaffirmation of the ‘unique character of the Incarnation’ (as David Brown *had* given in the previous ‘theological’ Debate of 1980), this theological position could even be said to bear many of the hallmarks of Race’s category of the ‘pluralist’.⁶³⁸ Certainly, in later years, the emphasis on a ‘praxis of Dialogue’ would be used by the pluralist Paul Knitter as the basis for his ‘liberation theology of religions’.⁶³⁹ The pluralist perspective of the Director of the subunit which drafted the WCC Report has already been noted. Separating theology and praxis, so that the emphasis is on praxis alone, turns Dialogue into a working ethic rather than a matter of Doctrine. In this respect, it is different to inclusivism and exclusivism, for which Doctrine (particularly the Doctrine of the Incarnation) is vitally important. I would argue that this is always the danger of a theology whose starting point is praxis alone: and it is interesting to note

⁶³⁵ The term to which the Holloway objected so strongly *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Revd D. Holloway (*Newcastle*), p.1033.

⁶³⁶ *RP 11/81 12/3*, Preb. J. Ginever (*Lichfield*), p.1028.

⁶³⁷ *RP 11/81 12/3* The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), pp.1021, 1043, respectively.

⁶³⁸ In the IFCG document of 1984, *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* (Church House Publishing, London, 1984), two characteristics of ‘pluralism’ are that ‘it takes seriously the incompleteness of any one Revelation’ (p.9) and ‘that those who hold this view are concerned with the way other religions might be brought into some kind of larger ecumenical relationship where the truths of each are seen as complementary to each other’ (pp.9–10). Race was on the board of the IFCG in 1984.

⁶³⁹ See Knitter, P., ‘Toward a Liberative Interreligious Dialogue’ in *Cross Currents* 45/4 (1995), pp.451–68. He later developed this theme in *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (Orbis, New York, 1996).

that scholars of Practical Theology have traced four different approaches to the relationship between Doctrine and praxis. Of those four, I have suggested that the ‘habitus’ model is the one which best comprehends the methodology of Anglican Practical Theology, not praxis. For the Bishop of Guildford now to say that one could ‘learn about Christ’ and ‘understand more about God’ from other faiths suggested to many members of Synod that there is Revelation to be found in other religions: an idea they believed to be theologically incompatible with the Doctrine of a unique and complete Revelation in Christ. One member of Synod expressed his disagreement thus:

I take very seriously Canon Max Warren’s definition of Dialogue in the BCC report where he says that Dialogue, in its very essence, is an attempt at mutual listening in order to understand, and understanding is its reward. I submit that listening and understanding are very different from learning and discovering insights into truths and having revealed to us hitherto neglected riches in Christ which comes from the fourth section of the BCC document, which the Bishop of Guildford said actually is the essence of the report.⁶⁴⁰

The theological point behind this speech was that the Revelation of God in Christ can neither be qualified nor added to. It is a unique Revelation, testified to by Scripture, which allows Christians to *know* about God. This appears to be exclusivist in the first instance, but in fact an inclusivist would not disagree. Everything a human being could wish to learn about God is contained within the Revelation of God in Christ. Although members of Synod do not make explicit reference to the theology of Karl Barth, Race uses Barth as the core example of an exclusivist position. With some

⁶⁴⁰ *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Revd D. Holloway (*Newcastle*), p.1032. Canon Max Warren was General Secretary of CMS from 1942–1963 and Canon of Westminster from 1963–1973. He worked closely with Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher during the 1950s and 1960s, in shaping the post-colonial structures of the Anglican Communion. He wrote extensively on Mission and some of his titles include: *Unfolding Purpose* (CMS, London, 1950), *The Christian Mission* (SCM, London, 1951), *Partnership: the study of an idea* (CMS, London, 1956), *Mission Commitments of the Anglican Community* (SPCK, London, 1957). He died in 1979.

caveats⁶⁴¹ I am also looking to Barth's theology to explain some arguments used by members of Synod in this Debate. As Karl Barth put it in his *Church Dogmatics*; 'God is'. Humans, 'do not discover, we are discovered' by the grace of God.⁶⁴² When this happens, 'a question is put to us'.⁶⁴³ Humans should not concern themselves with questions of who or what Jesus is, 'we do not have to answer ourselves or other men, we have to give an account *to* him.'⁶⁴⁴ 'Jesus Christ lives', wrote Barth,⁶⁴⁵ and he lives 'not for Himself but for the sake of humanity, for their deliverance'. Thus, for Barth, Christology and Soteriology are identical.⁶⁴⁶ However, Karl Rahner – an inclusivist – would not disagree with this, so it cannot be said to be definitely exclusivist. This theological perspective can be identified in several of the speeches in this Debate of 1981. So, for example one member of Synod says that Dialogue:

... will reveal that our co-religionists and ourselves all in fact fall short, that all, to use the Scripture reference, have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But my conviction in the Dialogue situation is that I believe that Jesus Christ actually is the one to meet the needs and the aspirations that we all have. To say that we are convinced is not arrogant if we have a true doctrine of election. What does that mean? It means surely that the people of God so named are called out from their co-religionists, co-secularists or what have you; they are in fact the ecclesia, the Church, whose function is to share what God has revealed to them in Christ with the world; and there is no notion of arrogance here. It is not because we are particularly meritorious, but it is of grace, that grace which is not to be kept but is to be shared.⁶⁴⁷

⁶⁴¹ It would be simplistic to assume that all evangelicals or all exclusivists agree with everything Barth argues for and I have already made the point that Barth's theology is both exclusivist and universalist.

⁶⁴² *Church Dogmatics* 4.3:69 (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1956–75) p.82.

⁶⁴³ *Church Dogmatics* 4.3:69 (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1956–75) p.76.

⁶⁴⁴ *Church Dogmatics* 4.3:69 (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1956–75) p.77.

⁶⁴⁵ *Church Dogmatics* 4.3:69 (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1956–75) pp.39, 42, respectively.

⁶⁴⁶ See the analysis by Jenson, R. W 'Karl Barth' in (ed) Ford, D *The Modern Theologians* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1997/ 2007), pp.21–36.

⁶⁴⁷ *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Revd D. R. J. Holloway (*Newcastle*), pp.1032–3.

By God's grace, Christians have been chosen to receive the unique Revelation of God in Christ. By implication, 'there is nothing of the grace of God to be found in any religion save that in which Christ is named.'⁶⁴⁸ This is more clearly exclusivist and it appears that the emerging theological boundaries, noted in the Debate of 1980, are becoming more clearly defined.

As I suggested in discussing the 1980 Debate, it is clear that there were profound differences of *theology* between those whose starting point was good relations between Christians and other faiths and those whose starting point was the conversion of other faiths through the proclamation of the Gospel. Of course, the Chairman of the BMU wanted to argue that the conversion of other faiths was still the end, the goal, of Dialogue: that it was only the *method* that was being considered. But this, in fact, was one of the problems which Holloway had with the concept of Dialogue. It was a concept whose popularity was directly proportional to its ambiguity: 'What I hear is the word 'Dialogue' and that everyone agrees with it, but I think I hear a number of different things being meant by that word.'⁶⁴⁹ Was it simply a question of method and not of theology? Could the two be separated? Several members of Synod, as we have already seen, had argued that they could not,⁶⁵⁰ and Holloway was now making the same point. By suggesting that Dialogue was merely an element of the good practice of Mission, the BCC/BMU Report was concealing the theological implications of the concept of Dialogue. It was a popular term because it could mean different things to different people. But for that very reason, it was also a dangerous one. This had been Persson's point when he argued in 1980 that Dialogue 'too easily lacks a frame of reference' and that when people use it 'we are hardly likely to be aware of our own

⁶⁴⁸ RP 11/81 12/3, The Rt Revd D. N. de L. Young (*Bishop of Ripon*), p.1035.

⁶⁴⁹ RP 11/81 12/3, The Revd D. R. J. Holloway (*Newcastle*), p.1032.

⁶⁵⁰ The Revd W. Persson, Preb. J. Ginever and Mrs V. Fisher, previously quoted.

presuppositions' or 'of the way an unthought-out universalism may have influenced our understanding'.⁶⁵¹ What the Debate of 1980 had shown was the need both for caution and for a firm doctrinal basis, when using the term 'Dialogue'. In 1981, it seemed that many members were not convinced that the BCC/BMU Report showed evidence of either of these things. By dividing theology and praxis and by confining 'Dialogue' to the sphere of the 'practical', the authors of the Report had been able to publish a document with very little theological content at all. What Synod had stated in 1980 and what Holloway and others were now arguing for, was the need for the Christian context and the theological premises of 'Dialogue' to be spelled out so that people could then understand with clarity what was its definition and purpose. The Chairman of the BMU, David Brown, had believed that 'everyone agreed that community relations were an urgent priority for Britain'.⁶⁵² What members of Synod could not agree upon, however, was that building good relations with other faiths should take precedence over the traditional Christian imperative of proclamation. During the course of the Debate, members of Synod augmented the concept of Dialogue presented in the Report, putting it into 'a Christian context'.⁶⁵³ The motivation for Dialogue should be Christ⁶⁵⁴ if Dialogue were truly to be understood as an imperative of the Gospel,⁶⁵⁵ and an opportunity for renewal.⁶⁵⁶

The key to the Debate seemed to be the matter of the *theological relationship* between good community relations (Dialogue, listening, respect, trust etc.) and proclamation (evangelisation and conversion). One member of the House of Laity, Mrs J. M.

⁶⁵¹ RP 7/80 11/2, The Revd W. M. D. Persson (*Chester*), p.603.

⁶⁵² RP 11/81 12/3, The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), p.1044.

⁶⁵³ RP 11/81 12/3, The Revd W. M. D. Persson (*Chester*), p.1024.

⁶⁵⁴ RP 11/81 12/3, Mr V. Menon (*Chelmsford*), p.1025.

⁶⁵⁵ RP 11/81 12/3, The Revd W. M. D. Persson (*Chester*), p.1022.

⁶⁵⁶ RP 11/81 12/3, Preb. J. H. Ginever (*Lichfield*), p.1029.

Mayland, spoke of 'the need to keep the balance between bearing witness to our faith and being truly open and available to others.' As the representative of the Church of England at the WCC Assembly in 1976 and also as a member of the Central Committee of the WCC, she pointed out that 'this tension is at the heart of our debate'.⁶⁵⁷ From the extracts reproduced here of David Brown's speeches of November 1981, it seemed that the BCC and BMU were suggesting that Mission could only be effective *as a result of*, and in an environment of, Dialogue. While Brown affirmed his own belief in the uniqueness of Christ,⁶⁵⁸ he clearly believed that good community relations were also a priority. It appears that he thought this need not affect the theology of Mission because he believed that one could separate theology and praxis.⁶⁵⁹ He was saying that he believed the social situation in Britain in 1981 demanded that Mission (in its traditional sense of evangelisation) had to be seen as *one element* of 'Dialogue'; that is to say, that praxis is the context for, and will inform, Doctrine.⁶⁶⁰

In the 1981 General Synod Debate, the Bishop of Ripon, David Young, made some important points about the likely implications of the BCC/BMU's position.⁶⁶¹ He argued that there was a flaw in the belief in 'common denominators' (which the WCC, BCC and BMU had found in social issues of justice, peace and good community relations), because it did not allow for the *differences* between the religions: the chief difference between religions being their 'utterly different'

⁶⁵⁷ RP 11/81 12/3, Mrs Mayland (*Sheffield*), p.1034.

⁶⁵⁸ RP 11/81 12/3, The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), p.1043.

⁶⁵⁹ RP 11/81 12/3, The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), p.1018.

⁶⁶⁰ However, by the mid 1990s, the theological implications of this position were being worked out in a way which would have probably been rejected by Bishop Brown in 1981. For this is the position which the 'pluralist' theologian would come to adopt: cf. the aforementioned thesis set out by Paul Knitter in 'Toward a Liberative Interreligious Dialogue' in *Cross Currents* 45/4 (1995) pp.451-68 and *Jesus and the Other Names: Christian Mission and Global Responsibility* (Orbis, New York, 1996).

⁶⁶¹ de La Young was the Chairman of the recently established 'Consultants on Inter-Faith Relations', the group that became the IFCG.

understandings of truth.⁶⁶² The theological assumption behind the BCC/BMU document was that there was a common goal, a common belief in God, a common understanding of humanity. Young argued that this was not necessarily the case. Each religion had very different understandings of God and humanity and the relationship between the two; and yet, each religion believed that their understanding had been revealed to them as 'Truth'. The danger with accepting the anthropological/phenomenological approach to religion, which catalogued all the religions together using categories drawn from 'common denominators', was that it had too little regard for what made each one unique. 'I do not believe that the question of truth can be put to one side', he said.⁶⁶³ The problem with the Report on 'Dialogue' was that it avoided one of the most potent reasons behind the violence and confrontation between the religions referred to by Brown in his opening speech; that is, conflicting concepts of truth.

The second question that is raised by taking seriously the conflicting claims to truth is that of discernment. Again, if all religion is categorised together using anthropological or socio-historical criteria, the effect is that all differences are relativised, including differences of morality. The question of truth, at the heart of the world faiths, stands in judgement on all perceived error. Does the umbrella term 'religion' mean that Christians must consider cults and sects to be on an equal footing with Hinduism, for example? Young concluded:

So I would want to give a positive answer to the question whether God is at work in the religious traditions and histories of those of other faiths at any rate in regard to some of them,

⁶⁶² *RP 11/8112/3*, The Rt Revd D. N. de la. Young (*Bishop of Ripon*), p.1036.

⁶⁶³ *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Rt Revd D. N. de la. Young (*Bishop of Ripon*), p.1036.

but I would want also to think very seriously about the criteria according to which one gave that answer.⁶⁶⁴

The final part of this Debate of 1981 concerned an amendment which requested the BMU to pursue a study of the theological aspects of Dialogue and offer a Report on the subject in due course.

AMENDMENT *Mr H. Gracey (Guildford)*

'Add at end:

"and asks the Board for Mission and Unity to bring forward a further report on the theological aspects of Dialogue in due course".'

Mr Gracey, from the Diocese of Guildford opened the discussion of his amendment by saying:

I seek to encourage the BMU in the preparation of a report, which is foreshadowed in GS 504, on the theological assessment of Dialogue so that we can have both a growing understanding of those of other faiths and also be well grounded in our own affirmation about the person and work of Jesus Christ.⁶⁶⁵

This reflects not only the fears that 'Dialogue' was an ambiguous concept, but also the realisation that in Dialogue with another faith, individual Christians must have some understanding of their own faith. The Archdeacon of Bradford had articulated this point when he said:

I accept the four principles of the report, but wish that there had been a fifth, and that is that Dialogue allows people of different faiths, including Christians, to learn about their own faith through having to articulate what they believe.⁶⁶⁶

It may appear from many of the speeches quoted that the instinctive reaction of members of Synod to matters of 'other faiths' was simply to restate the particularity

⁶⁶⁴ *RP 11/81 12/3*, The Rt Revd D. N. de L. Young (*Bishop of Ripon*), p.1036.

⁶⁶⁵ *RP 11/81 12/3*, Mr H. Gracey (*Guildford*), p.1045.

⁶⁶⁶ *RP 11/81 12/3*, Ven. F. P. Sargeant (*The Archdeacon of Bradford*), p.1037.

of the Christian faith. Certainly, there was a concern that, in meetings with 'other faiths', Christians would be tempted to dilute their own faith in order that 'good relations' might not be damaged. But there was also the concern that many Christians were simply out of the habit of 'witness', even of 'apologetics':

... those of other faiths in multi-racial communities have a right to expect from us participation in Dialogue which includes a clear expression of our own faith. They do not want tub-thumping dogmatism, based on the principle that the less secure you feel the louder you shout. Equally, they do not (*sic*) a wishy-washy under-developed expression of Christianity, nor a suppression of what we believe. If our faith in Christ means anything to us, they want to know what that meaning is and upon what it is based.⁶⁶⁷

There was an underlying mood of Synod that seemed to want to restate the Christian faith at the end of the twentieth century: i) What do Christians believe? ii) Which parts of it are different to the 'other faiths'? iii) Do Christians have anything in common with 'other faiths'? This Debate of 1981 had shown the need for a 'theological assessment of Dialogue,'⁶⁶⁸ in the context of the increasing numbers of 'other faiths' in Britain which brought questions of Religious Pluralism to the doors of the local parish church, even to (as the average member of the laity was referred to) 'Mrs Bloggs':⁶⁶⁹

I hope we give a positive expression to the need for all: individuals, parishes, deaneries, dioceses and at national level, to embark on Dialogue on a well informed theological basis.⁶⁷⁰

What was now clear was that the answers to the questions being raised by Synod could no longer be formulated without reference to those whose existence had raised

⁶⁶⁷ *RP 11/81 12/3*, Mr H. Gracey (*Guildford*), p.1046.

⁶⁶⁸ *RP 11/81 12/3*, Mr H. Gracey (*Guildford*), p.1045.

⁶⁶⁹ This term was used first by Preb. J. H. Ginever (*Lichfield*) and then picked up and used by Mrs V. E. Fisher (Blackburn), who so described herself, and the Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*). See *RP 11/81 12/3*, pp.1028, 1030, 1044, respectively.

⁶⁷⁰ *RP 11/81 12/3*, Mr H. Gracey (*Guildford*), p.1046.

such questions.⁶⁷¹ The very proximity of these ‘other faiths’ in Britain meant that the Church of England’s theology, Doctrine, government, even worship, were no longer isolated, internal Christian matters. ‘Mission’, not simply as proclamation but as relationship and living witness, was no longer something that could be left to the missionaries overseas. It was becoming what it should always have been: an integral part of everyday Christian life.⁶⁷² But in order for that to be understood, there was going to have to be a seismic shift in the popular perception of ‘Mission’. The BCC/BMU document on ‘Dialogue’ was the first step on such a road, but in 1981 the General Synod of the Church of England found it inadequate to the task. Here, the result of extensive Debate both in 1980 and 1981 was the recognition that the distinction between praxis and theology was not something that the Church of England was comfortable with and that a better theological understanding of the relationship between Dialogue and Mission was essential. So, it was decided that there should be further theological investigation of some of the questions raised in the 1981 Debate about the BCC/WCC Report. By doing this it gave an authority to the recently formed, loosely collected ‘Consultants on Inter-Faith Relations’ which they would otherwise not have had. And thus was set in motion the ongoing process of answering the questions “What do Christians believe? Which parts of it are different to the ‘other faiths’? Do Christians have anything in common with ‘other faiths’?” in ways which might be helpful to the local parish church, its priests and its laity.

⁶⁷¹ The truth of this can be seen in the inclusion of an entire chapter on the world faiths and salvation, in the 1996 Doctrine Commission’s Report on Salvation. *The Mystery of Salvation* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996).

⁶⁷² It is interesting to note that the Chairman of the BMU was sceptical about the possibility of translating these complex theological issues into terms the laity could understand. In opposing the amendment which would eventually lead to the publication of the most important theological document yet produced by the BMU/IFCG, he said: ‘I believe also that it is difficult to express a theology of other faiths in such a simple way that Mrs Bloggs can really understand it and accept it alongside all the other teaching she has been given.’ *RP 11/81 12/3*, The RT Revd D. N. de la Young (*Bishop of Ripon*), p.1044.

MOTION CARRIED

‘That this Report be received.’

‘That this Synod commends the four principles of the British Council of Churches’ Report *Guidelines on Dialogue in Britain*, to the Dioceses as a guide for action and asks the Board for Mission and Unity to bring forward a further report on the theological aspects in due course.’

4.3 The First Report by the IFCG

11th JULY 1984 9.40am

TOWARDS A THEOLOGY FOR INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE:

REPORT BY THE BOARD FOR MISSION AND UNITY (GS 625)⁶⁷³

MOTION PROPOSED *The Bishop of Wolverhampton*

‘That this Synod:

(i) commends the Report *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* for study, reflection and debate in the dioceses and theological colleges;

⁶⁷³ CHAIR	<i>Dr M. Hobbs</i>
SPEAKERS	<i>The Bishop of Wolverhampton (The Rt Revd Barry Rogerson) PROPOSER</i>
	<i>The Bishop of Ripon (The Rt Revd David N. Young)</i>
	<i>The Revd Dr G. V. Bennett (Oxford University)</i>
	<i>The Revd J. C. P. Cockerton (York)</i>
	<i>The Provost of Leicester (Very Revd A. C. Warren</i>
	<i>Mr J. W. M Bullimore (Wakefield)</i>
	<i>The Bishop of Leicester (Rt Revd C. R. Rutt)</i>
	<i>Canon Ivor Smith-Cameron (Southwark)</i>
	<i>Mr V. Menon (Chelmsford)</i>
	<i>The Bishop of Winchester (The Rt Revd John V. Taylor)</i>
	<i>The Revd A. H. M. Turner (Portsmouth)</i>
	<i>Mr M. L. Charlesworth (Lichfield)</i>
	<i>The Dean of Carlisle (The Very Revd Jack Churchill)</i>
	<i>Mr G. M. O’Brien (Chelmsford)</i>
	<i>The Revd G. Dodson (Norwich)</i>
	<i>Mr J. H. Barley (Exeter)</i>
	<i>The Archdeacon of West Ham (Ven. Peter Dawes)</i>
	<i>Canon J. H. Williams (Chelmsford) AMENDMENT</i>
	<i>Canon P. Oestricher (Southwark)</i>
	<i>Mr O. R. Johnston (Oxford)</i>
	<i>Canon J. H. Williams (Chelmsford) AMENDMENT</i>
	<i>Mr P. A. Lovegrove (St. Albans) AMENDMENT</i>
	<i>Dr H. W. Sansom (Guildford) AMENDMENT</i>

(ii) commends the work of the BCC Committee on Relations with People of other faiths and requests that Committee to produce an ecumenical study guide on the issues raised in the Report (GS 625);

(iii) asks the Standing Committee and the CBF to consider whether, in formulating the General Synod Estimates for 1986, there should be an additional contribution from the General Synod to the BCC towards the support of the work of its Committee on Relations with People of other Faiths.'

AMENDMENT (NEGATIVED) (*sic*) *Mr G. M. O'Brien*
(*Chelmsford*)

'Leave out paragraph (i) and re-number the remaining paragraphs accordingly.'

AMENDMENT (NEGATIVED) *Canon J. H.*
Williams (Chelmsford)

'Leave out "commends" in paragraph (i) and insert "submits".'

AMENDMENT (NEGATIVED) *Canon J. H.*
Williams (Chelmsford)

'In paragraph (ii) *add* at the end "in particular the uniqueness of Christ, the necessity of his atoning work on the cross, and the importance of a right use of Scripture.".'

AMENDMENT (NEGATIVED) *Mr P. A.*
Lovegrove (St. Albans)

'Leave out paragraph (iii).'

AMENDMENT (NEGATIVED) *Dr H. W. Sansom*
(*Guildford*)

'Leave out the words "to consider whether, in formulating the General Synod Estimates for 1986, there should be" and insert "to include in the General Synod Estimates for 1986.".'

The Report which the members of Synod were debating on 11 July 1984 has since become a classic.⁶⁷⁴ Dedicated to David Brown, who had died in 1982,⁶⁷⁵ it was the first work of the recently formed IFCG and its framework was noticeably different

⁶⁷⁴ In the foreword to the second edition, the Rt Revd Barry Rogerson (*Bishop of Bristol*) says: '... the report has been noted by both the World Council of Churches and the Vatican. We are grateful that what was seen as the first mile in a journey of exploration has been taken up by so many.' *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* (Church House Publishing, London, 1986), p.viii.

⁶⁷⁵ The Rt Revd David Brown (*Bishop of Guildford*), had been the Chairman of the ecumenical inter-faith committee CRPOF.

from the *Guidelines* produced by both the WCC and the BCC in 1970 and 1981 respectively. What I am interested to discover is whether these differences represent a distinctive Anglican approach. With the inclusion of three sections on the Bible ('the meat of this Report comes in the biblical section'),⁶⁷⁶ the authors had quite clearly heard the concerns of the previous two Synod Debates: that there is a strong voice within the Church of England which has always emphasised the priority of Scripture and, in particular, it comes from those who would consider themselves exclusivist. However, as this Report demonstrated with particular skill, Scripture is one of *three* cornerstones of Anglican ecclesiology, and while emphases may vary, the balance of Scripture, Reason and Tradition together is what marks any work of Anglican Theology as distinctive; and my own argument has also been that subjects like Religious Pluralism demonstrate that *experience* is a vital ingredient in Anglican Practical Theology.⁶⁷⁷ By the time it was written,⁶⁷⁸ Race (who was a member of the IFCG) had published his seminal book *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (1983) and the Church of England Report made full use of the three-fold paradigm as a framework for discussing the way forward.⁶⁷⁹

Both the Report and the Debate began with the context of the demographic situation of other religions in Britain in 1984, highlighting the fact that now:

Christians, Muslims, Hindus and people of other faiths work together in the same shops, offices and factories, study together

⁶⁷⁶ The Bishop of Wolverhampton, Barry Rogerson later Bishop of Bristol (above), was Chairman of the IFCG and introduced the report to Synod. *RP* 7/84 15/2, p.782.

⁶⁷⁷ *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* (Church House Publishing, London, 1984), 'Introduction', p.1.

⁶⁷⁸ Mary Tanner, Secretary to IFCG 'did most of the writing of this report. If it reads well, then it is her glory.' *RP* 7/84 15/2, p.804. A committed ecumenist, Dr Tanner was a member of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission from 1982–1991. She was responsible for suggesting that interfaith Dialogue was part of a 'wider ecumenism', which one member of Synod strongly objected to (*RP* 7/84 15/2, The Revd G. Dodson (*Norwich*), p.807.

⁶⁷⁹ Immediately following the Introduction and a section called 'A Changed Context', comes the section 'Christian Responses to Other Faiths: Exclusivism, Inclusivism, Pluralism' (see contents page).

in the same schools and colleges, travel on the same buses and trains, work together in the same hospitals and public services, pay the same taxes and are represented by the same Members of Parliament.⁶⁸⁰

While it was acknowledged that Britain had been multi-religious for many centuries,⁶⁸¹ the fears and ignorance that had been apparent at previous Synod Debates were taken into account as the Chairman of the IFCG – the Rt. Revd Barry Rogerson – introduced the Report to Synod:

For many English Christians this has been a strange experience. We know that we have to have respect and understanding for each other if we are to build good community relations, but we are not sure what attitude God would have us take towards them and their beliefs. We have an uneasy feeling that participating in Dialogue may involve us in disloyalty to our Lord.⁶⁸²

This is quite clearly a direct response to the evangelical members of Synod who had expressed exactly these concerns in 1980 and 1981, and the fact that they are addressed both in this way and in the emphasis on Scripture in the Report is, I believe, evidence of what I have called ‘mutual correction’. What those Debates had sought to do was to convince members that taking part in Dialogue was not ‘disloyal to our Lord.’ However, members had been unconvinced; raising the important point that ‘Dialogue’ itself was an ambiguous concept and its relation to Mission unclear. In commissioning ‘a further report on the theological aspects of Dialogue’, the 1981 Synod obviously hoped to find a way forward which could unite all parties in their approach to other faiths. The authors of the Report chose not to analyse the concept of ‘Dialogue’, but to use an investigation of the Bible to try and answer the question ‘what attitude God would have us take towards them and their beliefs?’ As a result,

⁶⁸⁰ *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* (Church House Publishing, London, 1986), p.5.

⁶⁸¹ *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* (Church House Publishing, London, 1986), p.4.

⁶⁸² RP 7/84 15/2, The Rt Revd Barry Rogerson (*The Bishop of Wolverhampton*), p.781.

members spent more time debating the use of the Bible, the three-fold paradigm and the Doctrine of the Incarnation than the question of Dialogue as a concept, despite having identified the important ambiguities which had remained unchallenged by both the WCC and the BCC. These ambiguities were highlighted in the 1981 Debate and are to do with the fact that 'Dialogue' is useful as a concept because it means different things to different people; however, while this may possibly be good for 'community relations', it is not good for theology and Doctrine, which must necessarily be thorough and work out the implications of the various understandings.⁶⁸³

The question which the Report *did* tackle head on, however, was the diversity of opinions about other faiths among Christians. It did this by employing Race's three-fold typology as a tool for analysis: exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism. Even at this stage, it was acknowledged that 'these categories are not rigidly tight, for most of us move from one emphasis to another.'⁶⁸⁴ However, members of Synod strongly disliked being categorised. This may have been because they felt there was an implicit (or explicit) criticism of the exclusivist and pluralist positions in the Report.⁶⁸⁵ Certainly, the Report and its Chairman were quite open about the fact that inclusivism seemed to provide the best vehicle for consensus, 'We have an inclusivist view of God's activity, but with an exclusive loyalty to Jesus Christ. This is the first and

⁶⁸³ Interestingly, in the same year, the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians *did* address this ambiguity by offering a document on Dialogue and Mission which identified four different types of Dialogue. See *The Attitude of the Church Towards the Followers of Other Religions. Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission*. (Secretariat for Non-Christians, Vatican City, 1984).

⁶⁸⁴ *RP* 7/84 15/2, The Rt Revd Barry Rogerson (*The Bishop of Wolverhampton*), p.782.

⁶⁸⁵ 'Paragraphs 14–23 include a pretty fair outline of the three possible positions ... but from paragraph 24 onwards the whole tone of the report changes... they are committed inclusivists.' *RP* 7/84 15/2, Mr G. M. O'Brien (*Chelmsford*), p.809; 'This report is not as balanced as it might be', Canon J. H. Williams (*Chelmsford*), p.12; 'I am unhappy about the way in which this report is unfair in the way it handles the three expressions.' The Revd A. H. M. Turner (*Portsmouth*), p.801; 'I think we find that one of [the three views] is very clearly put forward in a prescriptive sort of a way...the inclusivist way.' Mr J. W. M. Bullimore (*Wakefield*), p.793.

tentative step towards a theology for inter-faith Dialogue.’⁶⁸⁶ This is the example of evidence directly from the Reports and Debates which contributes to my hypothesis that an Anglican Theology of Religions is best described as exclusive-inclusivism. However, I have not put this hypothesis forward simply because members of the IFCG (including Race) say ‘we have an inclusivist understanding of God’s activity but with an exclusive loyalty to Jesus Christ’: my argument is developed from a combination of the strong exclusivist voice which has been heard in General Synod since the first Debate I have looked at in 1966 and the keen awareness which Anglicans have of being part of the National Church and the responsibility this brings with it. Rogerson described inclusivists as ‘those who acknowledge that whilst God has fully revealed himself in Jesus Christ, believe also that God has not left himself without witness in every age and culture.’⁶⁸⁷ At the heart of the inclusivist’s theological Debate, therefore, is the question of *Revelation* and, by extrapolation, *the Spirit* and *creation*. In the Report, the authors look at ‘The Creating God’, the historical sweep of biblical Revelation through ‘The Covenanting God’ and ‘the Electing God’ as well as ‘God as Spirit.’⁶⁸⁸ The Revd Dr G. V. Bennett, the member of Synod for Oxford University, summed it up in the Debate thus:

...this Dialogue needs a sound theology, and the question is: can we find a way of appreciating whatever is good and true in other religions while at the same time strongly affirming our belief that in Jesus Christ we have the supreme disclosure of God to man, his decisive act? I think we can ... At its heart is the section ‘God as Spirit’, and it reminds us that in traditional theology the Holy Spirit is active in two complementary ways, both outside as well as inside the Christian Church. Outside that community where Christ is named God works with all the peoples of his creation. It is a universal phenomenon that men have intimations of the spiritual dimensions to life. They have a

⁶⁸⁶ RP 7/84 15/2, The Rt Revd Barry Rogerson (*The Bishop of Wolverhampton*), p.783.

⁶⁸⁷ RP 7/84 15/2, The Rt Revd Barry Rogerson (*The Bishop of Wolverhampton*), pp.781–2.

⁶⁸⁸ *Towards a Theology of Inter-Faith Dialogue*, pp.15, 16, 20.

sense of awe and wonder. They ask questions about ultimate meaning. The answers may well be crude and unworthy, but as the Epistle to the Hebrews puts it, even before Christ, God spoke in fragmentary Revelations and in many manners. But we know, we affirm, that it is only inside that community where Christ is known that the Spirit is joined to the historic Word of God which is Christ and the full and true self-disclosure of God to man becomes explicit and active.⁶⁸⁹

This offers a good summary of Rogerson's phrase 'inclusive and exclusive' and certainly many 'self-confessed exclusivists' and 'evangelicals' declared themselves happy with the Report's 'grounding in Holy Scripture'.⁶⁹⁰ We have already seen how Rogerson presented the incipient theology of the Report as an 'inclusivist view of God's activity, but with an exclusive loyalty to Jesus Christ'. Later, he re-emphasised the exclusive nature of Christianity: 'We must indeed remember that there is a strong exclusivist line to be found within the Scriptures and within the tradition of the Church, an exclusivism which is right and proper.'⁶⁹¹ In *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity*, in 2000, D'Costa asked whether 'the typology that has sustained and formed much of the Debate is coherent, and whether all forms of pluralism [and inclusivism] inevitably collapse into tradition-specific forms of exclusivism.'⁶⁹² It seems that the opportunity for 'vigorous debate'⁶⁹³ between Laity, Clergy and Bishops managed, once again, to raise some important criticisms in the theological discussion of the period; which gives one hope that this kind of debating within a Church has something to offer the theology of the academy. This link between the Church as worshipping community and debating community and the Academy is an important one. In the field of Practical Theology the link has always been there, for example with Gustavo Gutiérrez in Peru, who worked in the slums of Lima, whilst also

⁶⁸⁹ RP 7/84 15/2, p.786.

⁶⁹⁰ RP 7/84 15/2, The Revd J. C. P. Cockerton (*York*), p.788.

⁶⁹¹ RP 7/84 15/2, The Rt Revd Barry Rogerson (*The Bishop of Wolverhampton*), p.804.

⁶⁹² D'Costa, G., *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* (Orbis, Maryknoll, NY, 2000), p.3.

⁶⁹³ RP 7/84 15/2, The Rt Revd Barry Rogerson (*Bishop of Wolverhampton*), p.803.

lecturing at the Pontifical Catholic University in the 1970s. Today in Practical Theology it is still evident as important contributors to academic Practical Theology are often those in seminaries and theological colleges, rather than those in Departments of Theology at University. As has become clear in this work with the Reports and Debates of the General Synod, the Church of England is at the heart of this link between Church and Academy, with its many academically trained Clergy and Laity contributing to Debates which are so informed by and relevant to the National Debate. I have tried to highlight these with brief biographies as such people contribute to the Debate – J. V. Taylor, Nazir-Ali and Race. Priests who are also theologians (or theologians who are also priests) and whose parish work therefore informs their writing are an important part of the theological history of the Church of England; for example, Richard Hooker in the sixteenth century and George Herbert and John Donne in the seventeenth century. However, the tradition continues with leading contributors to the academic debate today in fields of Practical Theology and Anglican Ecclesiology with priests such as Martyn Percy and Paul Avis.

So, while there was a questioning of the typology and a dislike of its classification, the Report's grounding in Scripture was warmly welcomed and with many of the evangelicals in favour of this, the Report looked set to have an easy passage through Synod. But it is also important to look at the arguments raised against the Report. I have said that there was much less discussion of 'Dialogue' as a concept in this Debate. In 1981, Synod had raised the criticism that 'Dialogue' assumed an historical comparison of the truth claims of all the major world religions.⁶⁹⁴ 'Dialogue' assumes everyone is meeting on a level playing field, when in fact the philosophical, ethical

⁶⁹⁴ See particularly The Rt Revd D. N. de la Young's concerns about the danger of the idea of 'common denominators.' 11/81 12/3, The Rt Revd D. N. de la Young (*Bishop of Ripon*), p.1036.

and religious context is a Western, liberal one. Comparison is futile (for theological reasons) as each is a near incommensurable paradigm and it would thus be like comparing an apple with a vacuum cleaner.⁶⁹⁵ This point is raised again in 1984. Mr Bullimore, from the Diocese of Wakefield said:

[the report says] 'This assertion of Christian supremacy is arrived at after an historical comparison of the truths and fruits of religious experience of the major world faiths.' What on earth does that mean? How do you make an historical comparison of that kind?

The major religions in fact make truth claims about matters of fact, about what has happened, about the way the world is, about what God is like. Those truth claims may all be wrong, but they certainly cannot all be right. I do not know how you begin to compare them... I do not understand either how you compare the fruits of religious experience. It seems to me to be something which is probably impossible.⁶⁹⁶

Taylor also wanted to address some 'inaccurate thinking' in the Report, which he believed was behind the anxiety of those members of Synod who were objecting to the Report:

On page 24 the report says 'There is no suggestion in the context that Jesus is claiming to be the "whole of God"

... We would never believe that there is a partial Revelation of the Father in the Son. That is another bit of inaccuracy and it is the kind of dangerous inaccuracy which can lead us one step forward into the kind of syncretism that is obviously scaring this Synod. 'He is the truth.' All through the Fourth Gospel the article is used of the truth'. It means the total reality. It is not just part of the truth.⁶⁹⁷

By using phrases such as 'other Revelations' and 'the fullest Revelation' Taylor felt that the Report gave the idea that 'we are dealing with something that is of the same

⁶⁹⁵ These criticisms seem once again to echo the debate which was going on in the academic world of theology. So, for example, John Milbank's essay 'The End of Dialogue' in D'Costa, G., (ed), *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered* (Orbis, Maryknoll, N.Y., 1990), pp.174–191.

⁶⁹⁶ RP 7/84 15/2, Mr J. W. M. Bullimore (*Wakefield*), p.793.

⁶⁹⁷ RP 7/84 15/2, The Rt Revd J. V. Taylor (*Bishop of Winchester*), p.800.

kind but of a little higher voltage in Jesus Christ.’⁶⁹⁸ So, the identification of the Son exclusively with the Incarnate Son ‘which is not at all what is meant by the Filioque Clause,’ could only limit the work of the Spirit, and therefore of Revelation.

The Filioque Clause is talking about the very nature of the Trinity in which ... the Spirit is proceeding from the Father and Son – in other words, it speaks of the existence of the Spirit in the eternal exchange between Father and Son. The Spirit is the flow of love, the flow of inter-relationship and exchange between Father and Son in all eternity. That is not making the Spirit dependent upon the Son, but dependent upon and within the very being of God.

If we really do hold that somehow in the incarnate Son we are able to see the truth that is truth for every man, then we can begin to look for that truth outside the Church.⁶⁹⁹

However, Taylor’s concern about inaccurate theology and the dangers of syncretism is not borne out by the evidence of the Reports of Proceedings. It seems as though the real anxiety of Synod members who opposed the Report (and there was an amendment which suggested that Synod could not recommend the Report to the dioceses and theological Colleges⁷⁰⁰) was in Rogerson’s (and the Report’s) understanding of *Revelation*. Whatever other religions displayed which Christians might interpret as ‘from God’, ultimately those religions were merely ‘religions’, or man-made constructs. ‘The “No” to the religions of the world is said because the constructs of fallen men and women, the concepts of world religions are the products of humans who are in a state of flight from God.’⁷⁰¹ ‘Religion’, as Mr V. Menon said during the Debate, in an echo of Barth, ‘is man’s manifestation of God, but

⁶⁹⁸ RP 7/84 15/2, The Rt Revd J. V. Taylor (*Bishop of Winchester*), p.799.

⁶⁹⁹ RP 7/84 15/2, The Rt Revd J. V. Taylor (*Bishop of Winchester*), pp.799–800.

⁷⁰⁰ AMENDMENDT ‘Leave out paragraph (i) (which commended the report for study, reflection and debate in the dioceses and theological colleges) and re-number the remaining paragraphs accordingly.’ RP 7/84 15/2, Mr G. M. O’Brien (*Chelmsford*), p.805.

⁷⁰¹ 7/84 15/2, The Rt Revd D. N. de la Young, (*The Bishop of Ripon*), p.784. Young was the first Chair of the Partnership in World Mission Council.

Christianity is God seeking man. Christianity is God's Revelation to man.'⁷⁰² The author of the amendment, Mr O'Brien was more forthright:

Where does the rot start? In paragraph 13 we read, 'Christians share with those of other faiths an awareness of, and a search for, "the Other" ', a broad assertion for which not a shred of evidence is offered. Some of us have a rather different idea. While that may be generally true about other faiths, Christianity is about God's Revelation of Himself to us in the man, Christ Jesus. There are facts about God which cannot be discovered by diligent enquiry and careful study but only if God himself chooses to reveal them.'⁷⁰³

If Revelation comes only from God through Christ then all discussion about a wider Revelation is rendered unnecessary. This is the exclusivist position, as Rogerson had described it at the beginning of the Debate.⁷⁰⁴ As the emphasis of the Report was weighted towards inclusivism, the theological discussion focussed on the historical sweep of biblical Revelation through discussion of creation, covenant, election and spirit. There was discussion of 'The Incarnate God', as we have seen from Taylor's criticism of that section, as well as a chapter on 'The Saving and Judging God'⁷⁰⁵ and this is where the evangelicals might have expected to find a theology they could subscribe to; one which gave due weight to Christology and Soteriology. However, in the analysis of 'The Incarnate God', the authors of the Report state that 'the Incarnation does not require that God the Son should be active only in Jesus of Nazareth.'⁷⁰⁶ In 'The Saving and Judging God', the authors suggest that 'there are many aspects of salvation developed and explored within the Bible' and there follows an *inclusivist* interpretation of the two texts which Race first suggested as the two

⁷⁰² RP 7/84 15/2, Mr V. Menon (*Chelmsford*), p.798.

⁷⁰³ RP 7/84 15/2, Mr G. M. O'Brien (*Chelmsford*), p.806.

⁷⁰⁴ 'Exclusivists – those who see the truth about God and his will for mankind being restricted to the message and ministry of Jesus Christ.' RP 7/84 15/2, The Rt Revd Barry Rogerson (*Bishop of Wolverhampton*), p.781.

⁷⁰⁵ *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* (Church House Publishing, London, 1984), pp.18, 21.

⁷⁰⁶ *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* (Church House Publishing, London, 1984), p.18.

‘exclusivist’ texts (Acts 4.12, John 14.6). The response from some members of Synod was clear:

We have to evaluate this report, particularly the theological section, in terms of both Christology and Soteriology. As far as Christology is concerned, I believe that those who wrote the report have gone a long way to try and safeguard the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, and I am grateful for that, but I believe that it is far weaker in the field of Soteriology.⁷⁰⁷

But with Christianity there is a proclamation of the mighty acts of God done in the historic person of Jesus Christ for men and for their salvation. It is God who acts and not man. It is he who acts in the cross and resurrection of his Son to bring salvation to those who cannot save themselves. The response to those saving acts is faith, the saving faith by which Christians live.

I wish perhaps the report had stressed even more sharply the strong gospel of the God alone who saves. Too often modern liberal theology offers a weak version of the gospel, and nowhere is its inadequacies shown more than in interfaith Dialogue. Here, above all, we must preach Christ in all his power to save, but, of course, that is what Synod ought to be doing at every moment of its meetings.⁷⁰⁸

In Chapter 6, The Saving and Judging God, I believe that here we find one of the chief weaknesses of the report, that in a section which is meant to deal with salvation there is no proper exposition of the doctrine of the Atonement at all; two sentences in five pages is just not sufficient.⁷⁰⁹

While there were many members of Synod who were not happy with the Report, who disliked its use of the three-fold typology to categorise them and who felt that its theology was one-sided, there was nevertheless a strong feeling that Dialogue with other faiths was something that Christians should be doing. This acceptance of Dialogue contrasts with the previous two Debates. So, the Revd John Cockerton could

⁷⁰⁷ *RP 7/84 15/2*, Canon J. H. Williams (*Chelmsford*), p.809.

⁷⁰⁸ *RP 7/84 15/2*, The Revd Dr G. V. Bennett (*Oxford University*), pp.787–8.

⁷⁰⁹ *RP 7/84 15/2*, Canon J. H. Williams (*Chelmsford*), p.811.

disagree that the Bible was about the historical sweep of Revelation, yet still conclude that Dialogue was essential:

The Bible is centrally about a movement of divine action in human history culminating in the Incarnation, and once we let that staggering fact sink into the mind and claim the heart and the whole of one's life is reordered and redirected, and it is the sense of being grasped by the great personal reality of being subdued and mastered by God in Christ that takes one into Dialogue as a totally committed person who knows himself to stand, though unworthily, in the grace of God.⁷¹⁰

There was still an emphasis on Mission in the Debate, and many who felt strongly that 'conversion' and 'changing' people from their religion to the one, true Revelation of God in Jesus was what Christians were impelled to do;⁷¹¹ but even these voices concluded their speeches calling for 'listening' and 'prayer'.⁷¹² Perhaps it was the efforts made by the authors of the Report to be clear about the relationship of Dialogue to Mission: Dialogue was not the same as proclamation and conversion. However, it was not 'a stalking horse' and coming as it did, from within the BMU, with full consultation with the Missionary Societies and Partnership for World Mission,⁷¹³ the Report was quite clearly offering Dialogue as *within the context of Mission*. It becomes, as the Report suggested, 'the medium for authentic witness.'⁷¹⁴ Dialogue is a tool if 'you are at the grass roots level dealing with people of other faiths', as The Very Revd A. C. Warren put it. 'I am an Evangelical, and I am living

⁷¹⁰ RP 7/84 15/2, The Revd J. C. P. Cockerton (*York*), p.789.

⁷¹¹ 'I am not too sure why it is that we are so afraid of conversions', p.800 (The Revd A. H. Turner) 'We do not want to enter into Dialogue with them, we want to change them.' Mr J. W. M. Bullimore (*Wakefield*), p.795.

⁷¹² 'You cannot have Dialogue without backing it by prayer. Somebody prayed for me for five years and I became a Christian six years afterwards. We cannot even think of Dialogue without prayer.' Mr V. Menon (*Chelmsford*), p.798. 'When I engage in Dialogue I want to be quite without hesitation in speaking of what I believe. What is important, in dealing with people of no religion and of other religions, is that I am prepared to listen.' The Revd A. H. M. Turner (*Portsmouth*), p.802.

⁷¹³ RP 7/84 15/2, The Rt Revd Barry Rogerson (*Bishop of Wolverhampton*), p.808.

⁷¹⁴ *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue* (Church House Publishing, London, 1984), p.32.

as well as working right at the centre of a multi-race city.’⁷¹⁵ This is a good example of the valuable contribution to the theological Debate which priests and laity of a National Church, working in multi-faith parishes can offer and I would like to conclude this chapter with Warren’s words:

In paragraph 78 of the report it says: ‘In Dialogue authentic witness is not only given in the words we speak but in the manner and bearing of the life we live. Human frailty and sin mean that Christians have always to struggle towards consistency between the message they proclaim and the image they present in life.’ I certainly go along with that very much, and I believe that in simple terms of courtesy and caring Christian love towards my fellow human beings there is witness. Yes, evangelism is witness, but so is caring love witness ... Though I understand all mysteries and have all knowledge, though I believe literally in the virgin birth of Christ,⁷¹⁶ though I accept every word of the Thirty-Nine Articles and know my way thoroughly round the ASB,⁷¹⁷ and have not love, it profits me nothing. I believe that is so in our dealing with those of other faiths.

I would like to stress this sort of loving in practice, not in theory, the loving which means sharing and welcoming and sometimes I believe even encouraging those of other faiths, is usually costly and certainly always open to misunderstanding... I believe that the main direction and thrust of this report is no more and no less than a Christ-like human response to our fellow human beings, and personally I wish it an effective and constructive journey through the dioceses and theological colleges.⁷¹⁸

Despite a serious attempt from a few members to stop this happening (‘I submit that it would be both unhelpful and misleading to commend to the dioceses a document

⁷¹⁵ *RP 7/84 15/12*, The Very Revd A. C. Warren (*Provost of Leicester*), p.791.

⁷¹⁶ A reference to the debate inspired by the Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins, on the literal acceptance of doctrines such as the Virgin birth and even the Resurrection.

⁷¹⁷ The Alternative Service Book 1980 was the first complete prayer book produced by the Church of England since 1662. Its name derives from the fact that it was proposed not as a replacement for the Book of Common Prayer but merely as an alternative to it.

⁷¹⁸ *RP 7/84 15/2*, The Very Revd A. C. Warren (*Provost of Leicester*), pp.791–2.

which is so incomplete as to lack the balance on which we should insist.’⁷¹⁹), the motion was passed unamended and the Report was accepted and commended to the Dioceses and theological colleges.

4.3.1 The Outcome of the Debate

MOTION PASSED

‘That this Synod:

- (i) commends the Report *Towards a Theology for Inter-faith Dialogue* for study, reflection and debate in the dioceses and theological colleges;
- (ii) commends the work of the BCC Committee on Relations with People of other Faiths and requests that Committee to produce an ecumenical study guide on the issues raised in the Report (GS 625);
- (iii) asks the Standing Committee and the CBF to consider whether, in formulating the General Synod Estimates for 1986, there should be an additional contribution from the General Synod to the BCC towards the support of the work of its Committee on Relations with People of other Faiths.’

For many of those who were unhappy with the ‘inclusivist manifesto’⁷²⁰ which they believed the Report to be, the offer of a study guide was the way to redress the balance. However, on researching the archives, there is no evidence of a separate study guide ever having been produced. What was published instead was a booklet produced by Kenneth Cracknell (CRPOF) and Christopher Lamb (IFCG) called ‘*Theology on Full Alert*’, published in 1985 by BCC and then revised and enlarged in 1986 or the reprinted and reworked BCC/CCBI document ‘*In Good Faith*’, published in 1991.

⁷¹⁹ RP 7/84 15/2, Mr G. M. O’Brien (*Chelmsford*), p.807.

⁷²⁰ RP 7/84 15/2, Mr G. M. O’Brien (*Chelmsford*), p.807.

4.4 Conclusion

I have called these three Debates the ‘Mission and Dialogue Debates’, because it seems to me that they can be understood as a coherent unit both in terms of the short timescale and also their content. There is no doubt that they are closely linked to the Debates of the previous two decades, in that the PMM of 1980 was initiated, once again, by the question of multi-faith worship, but this is indicative of the way in which the Church of England does its theology: as an Established Church its theology is always both informed by and usually initiated by *practical issues*. But the details of multi-faith worship were not what concerned this Synod and the 1980 Debate was entirely about the Theology of Religious Pluralism. This prepared members for the Debate of 1981 when they were presented with the WCC/BCC Report and their analysis of it was informed and astute, in a way which contrasted with much of the ignorance members had felt in the 1970s. In particular, they picked up on the way in which ecumenical theology was dividing Dialogue as *theology* and Dialogue as *praxis*. This is not the way the Church of England does theology and many members of Synod did not like the division. There was also a more nuanced understanding of the dangers of an all-embracing term like ‘Dialogue’, which it was felt was overlooked by the WCC/BCC. Finally, there was recognition that one of the areas in which the Church of England was lacking was apologetics in this new multicultural context and further theological consideration was called for. The Report, which was published as a result of this, was indeed a classic in that it is regularly reprinted and still widely used by priests in the Church of England, but it could not hope to fulfil all the requirements and expectations of the 1981 Synod and so there was still a great deal of debate as to whether it should be passed. However, there were certain elements that were obviously successful (the emphasis on Scripture and the

connection of Dialogue with Mission, for example); and as well as initiating the work of the IFCG, the structure of this Report reflected an understanding of the importance of Scripture to the Church of England after a period when the veracity of Scripture and the Creeds had been profoundly questioned, even within the Church, as the Doctrine Commission Reports of 1976 and 1981 showed.⁷²¹ This is the inevitable result of a Church whose identity is ‘diversity-in-unity’: a Church where all traditions continue to argue with one another across the Chamber of General Synod and whose theology is characterised by this mutual correction.

One metaphor for this diversity-in-unity is a long-term relationship, or marriage; and in this context, mixed-faith marriage serves as a very potent symbol. In 1992, the IFCG turned its attention to just this subject and it is to this we now turn as the final case study.

⁷²¹ In the 1976 Doctrine Commission Report, *Christian Believing: The Nature of the Christian Faith and its Expression in Holy Scripture and Creeds*, Geoffrey Lampe was on the Commission. At this time Lampe was Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, whose specialism was Patristics. He was from an evangelical background and, as his involvement in the Debates about Religious Pluralism show, he was concerned with apologetics and Mission. He contributes two essays to the Doctrine Commission Report, one a simple factual appendix on *The Origins of the Creeds* (pp.52–61). The second is an ‘individual essay’, written on the subject of Christian believing, ‘trying to make faith my own, despite inheriting it and not choosing it’ (p.100). Here he writes about Revelation, about the Bible and about certain key elements of the creeds. On the subject of doctrine he writes: “During most of its history the Christian Church has believed itself to be the possessor of a corpus of guaranteed truth in the form of divinely revealed systems of belief and theological propositions... According to this view it was proper to call the doctrine of the Trinity a revealed truth. As I understand the matter, we have come to realise that this is not the case. That God is one substance in three persons is an hypothesis or model...it is not a God-given doctrine” (p.102). This application of historical method, coupled with the increasing understanding that there are other ways of looking at revealed truth, led Lampe, the patristic scholar and priest, to doubt whether Jesus instituted ‘either baptism or the Eucharist’ and to ‘hold to be untrue’ the creedal clause ‘Born of the Virgin Mary’ and the fourth Anglican Article ‘Of the Resurrection of Christ’ (p.103).

CHAPTER 5

Mixed-Faith Marriages

In this final chapter, I turn to the two 'Occasional Papers' written by the IFCG in 1992 concerning mixed-faith marriages. Marriage, as a pastoral and theological subject, brings this thesis full circle back to the question of theology-in-liturgy with which this thesis began. Marriage is about a relationship, about Dialogue between the priest and the couple, and within the couple itself. It is, in one sense, a very practical issue, but it is also a sacrament: an outward visible sign of an inward invisible grace. As such, it is a perfect example of a subject which helps to both illustrate and develop the theology of the Church of England. Mixed-faith marriages were not debated in General Synod, nor were the Papers (Report and Guidelines) published. The Occasional Papers themselves are brief and therefore this chapter is also significantly shorter than the others. However, mixed-faith marriage represents an interesting case study of an issue which is peculiar to the Church of England as an Established Church.

5.1 Background to Mixed-Faith Marriages

This thesis began with the question of multi-faith worship because it was in the context of worship that the issue of other faiths was first raised at the national level of the Church of England. In that chapter I suggested that it was not surprising that it was *worship* which first began to frame the questions raised by other faiths because, as Sykes has argued and as I have agreed with, the theology of the Church of England is

found within its liturgy. Now, at the end of this work, I turn to the liturgy of the marriage service and the duties (once again) of the Established Church.

My argument throughout has been that the Church of England does have a distinctive theology and that it is Practical Theology. If my contention is correct then Practical Theology is a far older branch of theology than has previously been assumed. Practical Theology has always used case studies to both extrapolate and illustrate its theology in the same way and I have used the work of the IFCG to illustrate my thesis.

In 1992 the IFCG published two key Reports⁷²² on specifically practical questions: *mixed-faith marriages* and *multi-faith worship*. This was the decade in which the wider ecumenical scene also began to publish Reports on practical areas where Christians were requesting help with issues raised by Religious Pluralism.⁷²³ However, the remit of this thesis is to consider only the work produced by the IFCG of the Church of England between 1966 and 1996. For this reason, this chapter will look at mixed-faith marriages.⁷²⁴

Material from this chapter comes from two Board of Mission Occasional Papers (Nos 1 & 2) concerning mixed-faith marriage,⁷²⁵ published in 1992 as Reports to the House

⁷²² It also published '*Guidelines on situations which arise*', to work as a document alongside these two Reports.

⁷²³ CCBI: '*Guide to Inter-Faith Relations in Schools*' (1996), '*Pastoral Guidelines on Marriages between Christians and Muslims*' (1998), and the Inter Faith Network's report on its 1992 Conference '*Toleration and Integrity in a Multi-Faith Society*'.

⁷²⁴ In 1996, the Inter-Faith Consultative Group produced a Report, published by the Board of Mission, called '*Communities & Buildings: Church of England premises and other faiths*'. This Report has been considered in detail in the Chapter on redundant church buildings.

⁷²⁵ Board of Mission Occasional Paper No. 1 *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches* (August 1992).

of Bishops (of the General Synod), from the 1988 General Synod Debate on a Report of Marriage, and from work done in 1985 and 1986 by two members of the IFCG on mixed-faith marriages.⁷²⁶

In 1988, the Church of England debated the Report *An Honourable Estate*,⁷²⁷ which accepted that in law, every person resident in a parish has the right to be married by banns in the parish church according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England. After extensive Debate, the Report was received by General Synod with an additional motion carried which invited the House of Bishops:

to provide detailed advice to clergy in multi-faith parishes as to how they might fulfil their legal obligations when asked to conduct the marriage of an adherent of a faith other than the Christian faith.⁷²⁸

In response to this motion, the Standing Committee of the House of Bishops asked the IFCG⁷²⁹ for ‘a report on the pastoral, cultural and inter-faith questions to which the

Board of Mission Occasional Paper No.2 *Guidelines for the Celebration of Mixed-Faith Marriages in Church* (July 1992).

⁷²⁶ Lamb, C., *Belief in a Mixed Society* (Lion, Hertfordshire, 1985), Hooker, R. & Lamb, C., *Love the Stranger* (SPCK, London, 1986/1993). See, in particular, chapter 5 ‘Marriage and Family’ in Lamb, C., *Belief in a Mixed Society* (Lion, Hertfordshire, 1985) pp.71–82 and Appendix D ‘Mixed-Faith Marriage: A Case for Care’ in Hooker, R. & Lamb, C., *Love the Stranger* (SPCK, London, 1986/1993), pp.136–149. Christopher Lamb went on to become the CCBI Secretary for Inter Faith Relations, in which capacity he was also secretary of the ‘Islam in Europe’ Committee of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) and the Council of European Episcopal Conferences (CCEE). In 1998, he edited the CCBI publication ‘Marriages between Christians and Muslims: Pastoral Guidelines for Christians and Churches in Europe’.

⁷²⁷ Full title: *An Honourable Estate: The doctrine of marriage according to English Law and the obligation of the Church to marry all parishioners who are not divorced*, (GS801).

⁷²⁸ RP 2/88 19/1, p.163.

⁷²⁹ Membership of the IFCG changed according to the nature of the Report they were writing. In 1988 (Report published 1992 as *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*), the membership was as follows: CHAIR, The Rt Revd Christopher Mayfield; SECRETARY, The Revd Colin Podmore; MEMBERS, The Revd Canon Roger Hooker; The Revd Dr Christopher Lamb; CO-OPTED The Revd Andrew Wingate (Principal, West Midlands Ministerial Training College); The Revd Nigel Pounce (Team Vicar of St. Chad, Wolverhampton).

In 1991 (Report also published in 1992 as *Guidelines for the celebration of Mixed Faith Marriages in Church*), the IFCG was: CHAIR, The Rt Revd Simon Barrington-Ward (Bishop of Coventry), SECRETARY, The Revd Canon Dr Christopher Lamb, MEMBERS, The Rt Revd David Young (Bishop of Ripon) and The Rt Revd Jim Thompson (Bishop of Bath & Wells, then Bishop of Stepney).

Synod's request gives rise.'⁷³⁰ The IFCG produced the two Occasional Papers for use by clergy in multi-faith parishes. These Papers were not debated by the General Synod, and so what follows is an analysis of the Occasional Papers and some reference to the 1988 General Synod Debate which initiated them.

Before writing the Papers during the process of research, the IFCG collected evidence ('views and experiences') from five dioceses in the Church of England with large numbers of adherents of other faiths as well as researching current practice of a number of Churches in Europe and amongst the Anglican Communion.⁷³¹ Their first task was to note that the Report *An Honourable Estate* had been written 'with the needs of an increasingly secularised society ... in mind' but that 'the needs of an increasingly multi-faith society ... were not directly taken into account.' This was indeed surprising, considering that the Report was written in 1988, four years after the 'Mission and Dialogue' Debates which this thesis has already considered in Chapter 4. However, what it illustrates is that although the 'Mission and Dialogue' Debates would go on to have a lasting impact on the Church of England,⁷³² the immediate effect was still not yet fully understood. The IFCG was pointing out that it should not have been possible for a Report such as *An Honourable Estate*, which specifically dealt with 'the obligation of the Church to marry all parishioners' and written in 1988, to have been composed without reference to adherents of other faiths:

in view of the fact that there are now probably about two million such people (adherents of other faiths) permanently resident in

⁷³⁰ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 16, p.4.

⁷³¹ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 3, p.1. Details are not given as to which dioceses, churches and clergymen were asked, although Bradford was one of the dioceses (p.6). The IFCG noted the limitations of their own 'small size' and made the point that they were not claiming to have made 'a complete survey' (p.6).

⁷³² See the Church of England Website (www.cofe.anglican.org/info/interfaith, checked July 2010), whose headline story in December 2009 was still the 'Four Principles of Inter Faith Dialogue which the General Synod endorsed as long ago as 1981'.

England, we should have liked to see more consideration given to them. The only reference in the report ... comes in one clause of one sentence.⁷³³

The sentence to which they refer states that ‘It is indeed possible in law for non-believers or even members of other faiths (though we know of no actual instances of that) to have their marriages conducted in the Church of England.’ As the IFCG point out in para. 20, ‘several examples of such marriages were given in the General Synod debate’. However, their next statement; that ‘the incidence of requests...will become much more frequent in coming years’, is impossible to verify as there is no section on the register of marriages which requires a priest to note the religion of the bride or groom, nor any requirement to inform the Diocese of this. The government Office for National Statistics does not have data on the religious beliefs of those who get married in church, only where they get married. One of the problems faced by any Theology of Religious Pluralism at this time was the fact that those who did not live in key cities such as Bradford, Leicester, London and Birmingham, could honestly believe that the questions raised by people of other faiths were not relevant to them. For priests in these areas and also for those who could not agree in conscience to such weddings, the IFCG offered a ‘get-out’ clause when they reminded the House of Bishops that ‘it is important to note that an Incumbent or Priest in Charge is not obliged to conduct a marriage himself, providing he arranges for another Clerk in Holy Orders to do so; however, he must permit the use of the parish church.’⁷³⁴ However, the result of looking at a very specific pastoral issue, that of marriage, allowed the IFCG to shift the perspective, and this is what I have argued is distinctive in the Church of England. For ‘marriage’ demonstrates very clearly the privileged position of the Church of England, whilst also highlighting the theological responsibilities of the Established

⁷³³ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 19, p.5.

⁷³⁴ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 10, p.3.

Church: all those who are not divorced have the right to present themselves for marriage in their local parish church; and as the Report points out, this means that:

a Christian woman might meet someone of another faith in a 'multi-faith' area, but wish the marriage to take place in her rural or small-town home parish. All requests for marriage known to members of IFCG where both parties were adherents of another faith occurred in rural or small-town parishes, since they are most likely to be made in areas where there is no temple of that faith or supporting community.⁷³⁵

This explains why it is an issue which can affect those even in the most rural areas where there is very little presence of other faiths. Thus, whether you have 'difficulties of conscience',⁷³⁶ or not, the point was that it was impossible, even in 1988, to pretend that the pastoral issue was one which could never arise in your parish.

The IFCG then went on to analyse the theological presuppositions behind the concept of marriage in the Christian tradition, noting that it is rooted in Creation and that there is no such entity as 'Christian marriage', except in the sense of the marriage of Christian men and women.⁷³⁷ The underlying argument throughout *An Honourable Estate* is that the Doctrine and practice of the Church of England have long held the approach of pursuing a Christian understanding of marriage which is applicable to everyone.

In line with these views, as a Group, we understand marriage as rooted in the order of creation and available to all men and women, regardless of their faith. We believe that it is fitting that what God offers to all in marriage should be celebrated in His

⁷³⁵ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 25, p.7.

⁷³⁶ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 25, p.3. Interestingly, on p.8 the Report notes that one of the problems with *An Honourable Estate* was that, in whilst reinforcing the 1978 rejection of a prohibition on marrying the unbaptised, there was nevertheless an acceptance of the fact that the clergy should be given 'discretion' in such cases. However, in the 1988 report there had been no such permission for discretion when faced with members of other faiths.

⁷³⁷ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, paras 32, 33, pp.8–9.

Church. This suggests that it is often appropriate for mixed-faith marriages to be celebrated in church.⁷³⁸

In 1986, Roger Hooker and Christopher Lamb urged Christians not to dismiss mixed-faith marriages as being outside God's plan for Salvation.⁷³⁹ They pointed out that Joseph, Moses, David and Solomon all married non-Israelite women, although Deuteronomy 7:3–4 forbids the practice because of the idolatry which foreign wives might bring into the home. The Old Testament celebrates the marriage of Boaz and Ruth but the authors note that Ruth declared – 'Your people shall be my people and your God, my God.' (Ruth 1:16). In the New Testament, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7:12 that 'the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife...', but Paul's teaching about the relationship of Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:22ff) as mirrored in the experience of marriage suggests that the intimacy of that marital relationship must also include the intimacy of a shared faith. The Church has always insisted that marriage is a sacrament conducted by the couple themselves and that the Church's role was to be a witness before God and society to the solemnity of the vows undertaken. 'In other words, marriage belongs essentially to the order of Creation rather than the order of Redemption.'⁷⁴⁰ In this way, marriage in the Established Church is essentially inclusive, in the general sense of the word. The question is whether it can also be seen to be inclusivist under the terms of the typology. Certainly, the idea of being Christian but applicable to *everyone* is both exclusivist and inclusivist; although Christian truth as the ultimate truth which other faiths are seeking and in which they can be fulfilled is perhaps more like Race's classification of inclusivism. However, this idea of marriage being celebrated in a Christian building

⁷³⁸ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, paras 34, 35, p.9.

⁷³⁹ Hooker, R., and Lamb, C., *Love the Stranger: Ministry in Multi-Faith Areas* (SPCK, London, 1986/1993), p.138.

⁷⁴⁰ Hooker, R., and Lamb, C., *Love the Stranger: Ministry in Multi-Faith Areas* (SPCK, London, 1986/1993), p.139.

and Christian Liturgy is something which has been at the heart of the Debates on multi-faith worship and redundant church buildings. It was referred to in the first Debate I considered in this thesis – that is, that Debate of 1966 – when Revd Stride talked of the appropriateness of a Christian marriage service for a multi-faith wedding. In that case, the Muslim husband believed it was important that he should be married according to the religious laws and customs of the country that was now his home country. However, having said that ‘it is fitting that what God offers to all in marriage should be celebrated in His Church’, the IFCG then went on to make the point that, in fact, not all faiths shared the Christian understanding of marriage,⁷⁴¹ nor even that there was a single Christian understanding of marriage.⁷⁴² ‘For this reason we are equally clear that there are cases of mixed-faith marriage where a marriage in church is not appropriate.’⁷⁴³ With this caveat in mind, the IFCG quotes the Report, *An*

Honourable Estate:

There is no suggestion in this tradition that the Christian doctrine of marriage means either that marriage is exclusive to Christians or that it is an exclusively Christian institution. [It concludes that] the Christian tradition affirms that when Christians enter marriage they are entering into an institution which God has created and which is common to human life. People of Christian faith, no faith, or of other faiths enter into the created order of marriage whenever they commit themselves to this relationship. What essentially makes a true marriage is not the Church’s rites and ceremonies, nor even the couple’s faith in God, but their consent to a lifelong union.⁷⁴⁴

⁷⁴¹ ‘For instance, Islam explicitly allows the possibility of a polygamous marriage’, *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 37, p.9.

⁷⁴² The Report notes the fact that there has been a great deal of debate about the ‘primary purpose of marriage being the procreation and education of children’. *The Marriage of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 38, p.10.

⁷⁴³ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 40, p.10. For example, if a Muslim believes in polygamy if the couple were to move to a country where this is allowed, if the family of the person is strongly against the marriage – if it is a Jewish girl ‘marrying out’ of the community, perhaps – or if the marriage is cutting accross pre-existing plans for an arranged marriage.

⁷⁴⁴ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 33, p.9. Quoting from *An Honourable Estate* (GS 801), paras 28 and 31.

The IFCG goes on to root its own recommendations firmly in theological ground: ‘a sense that "it feels right" or is kind "pastorally" [to conduct mixed-faith marriages] is not enough.’⁷⁴⁵ If, as I have argued, it is possible to call the Church of England’s theological approach one of ‘Practical Theology’, it is also clear that this is not to say there is no theological rigour or integrity to its approach. Practical Theology begins with certain pastoral issues (such as marriage, in this case) and then subjects them to a rigorous theological interpretation in order to establish what the practical recommendations might be. In this IFCG Report to the House of Bishops the section on ‘Theological Considerations’ is the section with the most detail and the greatest length, covering sixteen pages of a forty-two page Report.⁷⁴⁶

In 1970, the Church of England had already decided that it would allow its priests the discretion to marry those who were not baptised. However, what the Archbishop of Canterbury had raised as a concern, during the Debate on *An Honourable Estate*, was the fact that this was leading to a diminished treatment of grace in the theology of marriage.⁷⁴⁷ This is part of what the IFCG call marriage ‘in the order of redemption.’ Therefore, they say ‘what we as Christians would say of marriage cannot be identical to what people would have said before the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord.’⁷⁴⁸ The grace of Christian marriage participates in the mystery of the Cross, in the love of Christ for the bride for whom he gave his life and whom he cleansed by the washing of water with the Word.⁷⁴⁹ In other words, while Revelation, through God’s grace can be said to be present in all Creation (and therefore in other faiths),

⁷⁴⁵ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 41, p.10.

⁷⁴⁶ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, Chapter III: ‘Theological Considerations’, pp.8–24.

⁷⁴⁷ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 43, p.11.

⁷⁴⁸ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 43, p.11

⁷⁴⁹ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 47, p.12.

this grace is deepened and developed by Christ, the New Creation. The IFCG says that while marriage is indeed rooted in the order of Creation, in Christ there is a new Creation: ‘in particular, he gives us a renewed vision of men and women as persons, recreated in the image of God.’⁷⁵⁰ However, while they emphasise this more ‘exclusive’ view of grace and revelation, they then go on to say ‘all people can be seen as on a journey or pilgrimage and we hope that many who are yet outside the recognisable boundaries of the Churches and of a Christian may well be on their way towards them.’⁷⁵¹ Here is recognisable inclusivist theology of fulfilment.

Of course, as soon as members of the Church of England begin to take theology seriously, they come up against the fact that there are other members of their church who will have a very different theological approach and it is typical of Reports written within the Church of England that the IFCG acknowledges this fact:

We also consider it vital that in any report, such as the present Report, which seeks to describe the doctrine of the Church of England, each of the mainstream traditions of our Church can recognise its own teaching and see it affirmed...Among our number, of course, are those who identify particularly with each of these views [the sacramental and the specifically biblical], while for others they do not predominate. All of us, however, would wish to affirm their importance within the Anglican tradition. We believe that they need to be held in a creative tension with the view underlying *An Honourable Estate*, so that mutual correction can take place.⁷⁵²

So, as I have continued to argue throughout this thesis, the theology of the Church of England is not only a *Practical* Theology, but one we can identify as a ‘mutually corrective’ theology (and here indeed is the Report where the phrase comes from): one which is compelled to consider the full theological complexity of the Doctrine behind

⁷⁵⁰ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 44, p.11.

⁷⁵¹ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 61, p.16.

⁷⁵² *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, paras 46, 49 pp.11 and 13.

a practical matter, whilst believing that the truth will also be uncovered through ‘mutual correction’, or *Dialogue*. This is theology seen as incomplete without the inclusion of intra-ecclesial Dialogue, which is why I am arguing that the Church of England is well placed to offer a Theology of Religious Pluralism. The Dialogue which Religious Pluralism requires, reminds the Church that ‘all people can be seen as on a journey or pilgrimage.’ More than this, the IFCG suggests something which I would wish to identify as intrinsically part of the theology of the Church of England, that the meeting of two different theologies should be considered as fruitful and positive:

Indeed the inter-faith nature of such a marriage could be a particular strength, and mixed-faith marriages have considerable potential as a point of meeting and dialogue between communities.⁷⁵³

For this reason, it identifies the obligation imposed on priests by the fact of establishment not as ‘a legal bind’, but as a way of ‘following the example of our Lord, who in his earthly ministry was constantly going beyond the barriers imposed on him by religious professionals and social custom to seek out those who needed him.’⁷⁵⁴

This ability to draw from all traditions of the Church has always been to the benefit of the Church of England, and in this Report its use of research into the Catholic tradition allows it to correct the ‘diminished treatment of grace’ of the Report *An Honourable Estate* and also allows for a much fuller understanding of sacramental theology than

⁷⁵³ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 57, p.15.

⁷⁵⁴ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 58, p.15.

was found, for example, in the 1973 Report of the Use of Redundant Church Buildings:⁷⁵⁵

We also consider it vital that in any report, as the present Report, which seeks to describe the doctrine of the Church of England, each of the mainstream traditions of our Church can recognise its own teaching and see it affirmed. The Catholic tradition within the Church of England upholds the view that marriage is one of seven sacraments ... we should have liked to see a fuller treatment of the sacramental understanding of marriage in *An Honourable Estate*.

The IFCG seek to correct this with a full section on the Catholic understanding of marriage. So they say ‘the Anglican doctrine ... conceives marriage as God’s ordinance in the order of creation, taken by Christ and the Church into the sacramental order’.⁷⁵⁶

It is the Roman Catholic Church which has gone farthest in providing for mixed-faith marriage, the best and most detailed booklets and materials providing guidance for the clergy on this subject which we have seen being those published on behalf of the European Bishops’ conferences...The Roman Catholic Church makes the distinction between marriage in the order of creation and the Christian sacrament of marriage. Sacramental marriage is seen as available only to baptised Christians, but nevertheless a Christian understanding of marriage is regarded as applicable to marriages between Christians and non-Christians.⁷⁵⁷

However, the IFCG goes on to make the point that while ‘the Roman Catholic Church advises its members against marrying people of other faiths ... we wish to

⁷⁵⁵ *The Use of Church Buildings – Report by a Working Party (GS 135)*. See commentary from the Debate in General Synod on this Report, 7/73 4/2, Chapter 1, page 151ff.

⁷⁵⁶ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 47, p.14.

⁷⁵⁷ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, paras 54, 55, p.14. After the Report’s initial suggestion that ‘there is no such thing as Christian marriage, except in the sense of the marriage of Christian men and women’, it then goes on to talk about a ‘Christian understanding’ of marriage, which derives three key principles from the New Testament: marriage as exclusive, as lifelong, and commitment as being an essential characteristic. See para. 67, pp.17–18.

stress, however, that none of us regards such marriages as necessarily implying a betrayal of the faith.’⁷⁵⁸

Theologically, the IFCG draw together the two different traditions of the Church of England: the Catholic tradition whose emphasis is more often associated with the Sacramental, and the Evangelical tradition which has tended to emphasise *solus Christus*, as I have highlighted in the General Synod Debates of the 1970s and 1980s. This self-consciously ‘new understanding’ can be demonstrated in a paragraph on ‘The New Creation’:

The Incarnation, the cross and the resurrection enable us to see the creation in a new light, so that we are ourselves ‘a new creation’. Indeed, it is the Christian belief that it is only through redemption that one can properly understand the creation. This might suggest that it is not so much the creation that has changed as our ability to understand it. It is this new understanding which we offer to the world.⁷⁵⁹

I have already noted the use of the language of ‘journey’ and ‘pilgrimage’ by the IFCG. However, they soon make use of an even more relevant metaphor for their theology in this Report, that of marriage itself:

To return to more sacramental language, the ‘thing signified’, the mystical union which is betwixt Christ and his Church, is a continuing reality and not a single event; so it is in the developing marriage relationship and not in the wedding event that we should seek the sign ... So we can pray that the relationship of those who come to be joined into this ‘holy estate’ will grow into such a sacrament of Christ’s union with his Church.⁷⁶⁰

The Report uses this theology to recommend that priests should ‘err on the side of generosity’ when considering whether it is appropriate that a mixed-faith marriage

⁷⁵⁸ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 57, p.15.

⁷⁵⁹ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 60, p.16.

⁷⁶⁰ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 64, p.17.

should take place in church. Developing the theme of faith as pilgrimage, the IFCG says: 'We have been told of a case where no real understanding of the Christian faith was apparent when a couple married in church, but both later came to faith.'⁷⁶¹

Finally, the Report moves onto the language of the liturgy. This is an important section, because although all priests in the Church of England must accept their responsibility to allow a member of their parish to marry in church, their obligation stipulates that this must be by 'the forms of service which are authorised or allowed by canon'.⁷⁶² Such forms of service are found in the Book of Common Prayer, which is authorised in perpetuity and the alternative services, authorised for use by the General Synod. The IFCG acknowledges that there are those who have called for a liturgy to be authorised which dispenses with the language of the Trinity 'in favour of more general descriptions of God which would not explicitly conflict with the understanding of God in other religions.'⁷⁶³ Once again, liturgy is at the heart of a theological Debate. However, as the IFCG points out:

... the entire liturgy prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer or in one of the authorised alternative services constitutes the rite and ceremony required by law. This means that the omission of words and phrases by a minister could put the validity of the marriage in question. Even if the General Synod were to prepare an alternative service, it is hard to see how a liturgy which made no reference to the Trinity could be construed as a rite and ceremony of the Church of England.⁷⁶⁴

Further than this, the Report goes on to say that 'if material from other faiths is to be included in the service, neither words nor acts nor objects should have a meaning

⁷⁶¹ Both quotations taken from *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 70, p.19.

⁷⁶² Yates, L. & Adam, W., *Canon Law for the newly ordained: a brief guide and teaching aid* (Church House Publishing, Canterbury, 2007), p.11.

⁷⁶³ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 76, p.20.

⁷⁶⁴ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 77, pp.20–21.

which is contrary to the Christian faith.’⁷⁶⁵ Within the framework of liturgy is expressed the inclusivist idea that what is good and true and honourable in other religions is all causally related to God’s revelation in Christ: or, to use language that I have drawn out from previous General Synod Debates: fulfilment, not discontinuity.

In 1995 the Doctrine Commission would publish *The Mystery of Salvation*, for which the IFCG wrote an important chapter, ‘Christ and the World Faiths’.⁷⁶⁶ The Doctrine Commission identified the theological framework for the Report as the consideration of ‘forgiveness, suffering, sacrifice and sacrament’ and the authors make the explicit link between liturgy-as-theology when they say, ‘Christian liturgies all reflect the Church’s understanding of these truths, and as we are the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England we have provided an appended note on understandings of salvation to be found in the Book of Common Prayer and in the Alternative Service Book.’⁷⁶⁷ I have already shown how the Doctrine Commission explained the Doctrine of God using the method of ‘prayer’.⁷⁶⁸ In 1995 (*in the Mystery of Salvation*) the Doctrine Commission did something similar when they commented on the Doctrine of the Suffering of God:

these insights have hardly penetrated the official liturgies of the churches...but in responding to [these insights] ... we might take

⁷⁶⁵ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 140, D6, p.41.

⁷⁶⁶ ‘Christ and the World Faiths’ in *The Mystery of Salvation* (Church House Publishing, London, 1995), pp.390–422. In particular, the way in which Hooker’s work continues to inform the work of the Doctrine Commission, is demonstrated when the source for the title of the Report is taken from Hooker’s *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book 1.xi.5, 6: ‘There resteth therefore either no way unto salvation, or if any, then surely a way which is supernatural, a way which could never have entered the heart of man as much as once to conceive or imagine, if God himself had not revealed it extraordinarily. For which cause we term it the Mystery or Secret way of salvation.’ (p.278).

⁷⁶⁷ ‘The Mystery of Salvation’ in *Contemporary Doctrine Classics from the Church of England* (Church House Publishing, London, 1995), p.277.

⁷⁶⁸ ‘The obedience of Prayer’ in *We Believe in God* (Church House Publishing, London, 1987), pp.100–103.

our cue from W. H. Vanstone's reflections on the cross of Christ as revealing the heart of a fellow-suffering God.⁷⁶⁹

There follows from this, the last three verses of one of Vanstone's hymns. Even in the twentieth century, the Church of England's theology is still to be discovered through the writings of its divines. In fact, the whole of Chapter 5 in *The Mystery of Salvation*, which is called 'Re-telling the story', does so using hymnody and examples of liturgy to make its point.⁷⁷⁰

The 1992 IFCG Report on mixed-faith marriages also picks up the need for apologetic, which was identified in the 1981 Debate; the way forward, they suggest, is in the marriage preparation, with the priest explaining 'what we mean by the Holy Trinity – for example that Christians do not believe in three Gods but that God is one. Such an explanation might be the starting point for fruitful dialogue.'⁷⁷¹ Returning to one of their original points about the priest's conscience, this section concludes with a renewed emphasis on grace:

Our Christian marriage service, with its Christian understanding of marriage and its Trinitarian language is not something we impose on unwilling couples. Rather it is something we offer in the Name of God, who instituted marriage and which applicants are free to accept ... or decline.⁷⁷²

After considering the theology of marriage, and affirming that the majority of mixed-faith marriages are 'happy and successful', the Report then goes on to outline some of

⁷⁶⁹ 'The Mystery of Salvation' in *Contemporary Doctrine Classics from the Church of England* (Church House Publishing, London, 1995), p.366.

⁷⁷⁰ 'The Mystery of Salvation' in *Contemporary Doctrine Classics from the Church of England* (Church House Publishing, London, 1995), pp.357-370. W. H. Vanstone (1923–1999) was described in his obituary as 'the most intellectually brilliant of the many able men ordained after the Second World War'. (www.theindependent.co.uk 11 March 1999, by Alan Webster. Website checked July 2010). He took a double first at Balliol, Oxford and a starred first at Westcott House, Cambridge. He worked as a parish priest from his ordination until his death, although he was a member of the Doctrine Commission from 1981–1985. His hymns and his books on spirituality are well known and include *Love's Endeavour*, *Love's Expense* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1977).

⁷⁷¹ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 81, p.22.

⁷⁷² *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 82, p.22.

the social and pastoral considerations, which parish priests should be aware of in preparing mixed-faith couples for marriage. These range from questions about the faith of the children, to the round of festivals and rites of passage which the couple will attend, including consideration of their own funerals.⁷⁷³ The Report then raises some relevant questions about the differences of communities, or culture and of ethnic origin.⁷⁷⁴ There is no doubt that these passages have been written by priests with a great deal of experience of the matters on which they speak; and Christopher Lamb and Roger Hooker's first-hand experience of the Muslim faith in (respectively) Pakistan and India as well as in the Diocese of Birmingham are clearly important in informing the issues raised.⁷⁷⁵ When the IFCG later goes on to mention possible liturgical considerations, their suggestions are practical and sensitive – for example,

⁷⁷³ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 82, pp.24–25. The Report does not make reference to any empirical evidence for this claim and it stands in contrast to Christopher Lamb's conclusion in Lamb, C., *Belief in a Mixed Society* (Lion, Hertfordshire, 1985), Chapter 5, 'Marriage and Family': 'In practice, many mixed-faith marriages end in the virtual capitulation of one religious identity to the other.' (p.82). It should be noted that there is no empirical evidence referred to for this claim either.

⁷⁷⁴ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 82, pp.25–28.

⁷⁷⁵ See Hooker, R. & Lamb, C., *Love the Stranger: Ministry in Multi-Faith Areas* (SPCK, London, 1986/1993), Preface p.xv. I have already noted Lamb's conclusions about mixed-faith marriage in his 1985 book. In 1982 he published a paper for the BCC, entitled 'Mixed-faith marriage, a case for care. His chapter on mixed-faith marriage in 1985 is a fascinating and extremely well-informed guide to marriage culture on the Indian subcontinent. He concludes his 1985 chapter on marriage with 'So a generation which does not believe in itself or anything else does not even bother to ensure its own continuity. But so also, in the mercy of God, the East provokes the West to rediscover its roots and the source of all creativity.' Lamb, C., *Belief in a Mixed Society* (Lion, Hertfordshire, 1985), p.82. In the book he published with Roger Hooker in 1986 (Hooker, R. and Lamb, C., *Love the Stranger: Ministry in Multi-Faith Areas* (SPCK, London, 1986/1993), Lamb's paper to the BCC is reproduced as 'Appendix D' and the emphasis is a little different. As I have already mentioned, he begins his biblical section recording the mixed-faith marriages which have been important in the Old Testament and then St Paul's thoughts on marriage in the New Testament. He briefly summarises the different viewpoints of the religions on marriage and then, in a style with which Practical Theology has become very familiar and which has been made use of in several IFCG Reports, he lists 'case-studies of typical situations.' Having done this, he devotes most of the rest of the paper to 'the pastoral task'. It is an excellent summary of five key points, written by a parish priest, for priests and ministers and it is thoughtful and clear; although it opens with the single question, "can a minister do other than counsel a Church member against marrying someone who does not share his or her faith?" p.144. The five points are, 1. A Pastor's main responsibility is to his church members. 2. Pastors need to have a care for the spiritual integrity of all involved. 3. Pastors need to be peacemakers. 4. Pastors must be concerned about the children of the marriage. 5. Pastors should be alert to practical problems. They conclude with a list of questions which a priest should have in mind or try to ask the couple in order for them to think about. The perspective throughout this paper is an exclusivist one, though as I have said, it is an exclusivism informed by years of missionary and parish work. However, if marriage is a metaphor for the Dialogue which can take place, then Lamb's response is that Christians should be on their guard and know how to articulate their own faith in a loving but clear manner.

the possibility of having readings or service sheets in the mother tongue of one of the partners, where this is not English.⁷⁷⁶ Lastly there is a section of 'evidence from other faiths,' with an extensive section on the Jewish faith and the problems of 'marrying out',⁷⁷⁷ and finally 'the practice of other churches',⁷⁷⁸ both of which offer an insight into the approach to this issue taken by other faiths and other denominations.

In the end, the purpose of this Report was to make recommendations to the House of Bishops, in order that individual parish priests in their Diocese would be more fully equipped to deal with the situation of marrying an adherent of another faith in the parish church. The recommendations included the fact that every Diocese should appoint a resource person to be responsible for interfaith relations as well as the fact that a set of Guidelines be published, which could be available to any parish priest helping a couple who had sought marriage in church to know whether this was indeed the best decision for them. The mention of a resource person is the first explicit recommendation and it was the origin of what has become nationally the status quo in Dioceses across the Church of England.⁷⁷⁹

The Guidelines which were published were also written by the IFCG and then passed by the House of Bishops. These offered a condensed version of the earlier Report, divided into seven sections. The first section details 'The Legal Position' in a simple,

⁷⁷⁶ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 104, p.29.

⁷⁷⁷ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, pp.29–34.

⁷⁷⁸ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, pp.34–38.

⁷⁷⁹ In 1996, Christopher Lamb set up the Christian Interfaith Practitioners Association (CIPA) to which all Diocesan Interfaith Advisers were automatically affiliated. As Secretary of the IFCG he also wrote annually to all the Interfaith Advisers. His successor, Michael Ipgrave systematised the list and set up an 'e-network' for them. They are also kept in touch with one another through an annual Conference (all details from personal correspondence with Guy Wilkinson, National Inter Religious Affairs Adviser & Secretary for Inter Religious Affairs to the Archbishop of Canterbury, December 2009).

comprehensive manner.⁷⁸⁰ Next comes 'Theological Considerations', which summarises the longer piece in the Report on the Christian understanding of marriage, the order of creation, the order of redemption and the question of grace and sacrament.⁷⁸¹ In the section entitled 'The Pastoral Judgement', the group reminds readers that there are three considerations which should help any priest to decide whether a couple could have a Christian marriage service: will they accept marriage as *exclusive* ('forsaking all other'), as *lifelong* ('so long as ye both shall live') and involving *commitment* ('mutual society, help and comfort'). 'The critical question for the marriage of a mixed-faith couple in church is whether there is an acceptance of marriage as exclusive, lifelong and involving commitment, and an openness to the wider Christian understanding.'⁷⁸² The Guidelines do not offer help in interpreting this phrase but the next section which follows immediately from this is 'Liturgical Considerations', which reiterates the fact that in church marriage must be a Christian ceremony, the text of which includes reference to the Doctrines of Jesus Christ as Son of God and of God as Trinity. Acceptance of a service like this, after explanation from the priest is, presumably, what they mean by 'an openness to the wider Christian understanding'. But it also highlights the opportunity for Dialogue and witness between both the priest and the couple and which may then help to become the foundation for Dialogue between the couple on matters of faith.⁷⁸³ 'Pastoral Issues' reproduces verbatim the four issues identified in the Report (faith, community, culture and ethnic origin)⁷⁸⁴ and the penultimate section 'The Practice of Other Faiths' gives a very brief summary of the practice of the five other major world religions.⁷⁸⁵ Finally

⁷⁸⁰ *Guidelines for the Celebration of Mixed-Faith Marriages in Church*, pp.1–2.

⁷⁸¹ *Guidelines for the Celebration of Mixed-Faith Marriages in Church*, pp.2–3.

⁷⁸² *Guidelines for the Celebration of Mixed-Faith Marriages in Church*, note 14, p.4.

⁷⁸³ *Guidelines for the Celebration of Mixed-Faith Marriages in Church*, pp.4–5.

⁷⁸⁴ *Guidelines for the Celebration of Mixed-Faith Marriages in Church*, pp.5–9.

⁷⁸⁵ *Guidelines for the Celebration of Mixed-Faith Marriages in Church*, pp.9–10.

there is another summary of 'The Practice of Other Churches', which includes mention of 'European and American Churches', the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church in Japan.⁷⁸⁶ It makes the important point, however, that the reason why this question emerges specifically in the Church of England is because of its status as the Established Church.⁷⁸⁷ The Guidelines finish with a short bibliography, including two references to works by the Roman Catholic Church on the subject.

The Report on mixed-faith marriages looked in some detail at the question of liturgy and had concluded that there was very little room indeed for change from the authorised version.⁷⁸⁸ However, with sensitive handling, there were helpful suggestions about the inclusion of prayers, readings and the use of the mother tongue; as long as all such material could be considered to be 'appropriate': 'Although we are cautious about removing items from the liturgy, we are strongly in favour of the addition of material appropriate to the occasion in the second part of the service'.⁷⁸⁹ There is acknowledgement that if a couple opted for a 'service of prayer and dedication' (i.e. if they were married first in a registry office), then there would be more freedom to 'minimise the number of items which might "exclude" people of

⁷⁸⁶ There is no discussion of the fact that there are many other countries which have a state-established religion, nor the possibility into an investigation as to how the Churches in these countries reflect on the tensions between the responsibilities of National Church and Confessing Church. Countries which might have been considered include Poland, for the Roman Catholic Church, Greece, Romania and Cyprus for the Eastern Orthodox Church, and Finland and Sweden for the Lutheran Church (although Sweden was dis-established in 2000).

⁷⁸⁷ *Guidelines for the Celebration of Mixed-Faith Marriages in Church*, pp.10–11.

⁷⁸⁸ The only suggestion which was made in the Report was later omitted from the Guidelines: which was that the single action with which the couple are required to demonstrate their assent to the Trinity, namely the giving of the ring(s) in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, could perhaps be permitted to be changed to 'in the name of God'. *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches* para. 80, p.22. There is no mention of this in the Guidelines.

⁷⁸⁹ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 83, p.22.

other faiths. However, they conclude that ‘Nevertheless... such a service would have to be explicitly Christian...in order to preserve Christian integrity’.⁷⁹⁰

5.2 Conclusion

There are several elements of these Occasional Papers that are worth noting. The first is that by the time they were written in 1992, the IFCG considered it acceptable to chastise those who in 1988 had written a Report on marriage with almost no reference to other faiths at all. In order to write their own Report for the House of Bishops they were able to conduct first-hand research within parishes in England, to use as evidence. All this is proof that by the time these Occasional Papers of 1992 were being written, Religious Pluralism had become a fact for a great many parish priests in the Church of England and the IFCG was playing an important role in writing Guidelines for them to negotiate the peculiarities of being a priest in an Established Church.

However, by referring to the later Doctrine Commission Reports of 1985 and 1995, I hope I have also shown that the Church of England was beginning to see the presence of other faiths in England as an opportunity; an opportunity to consider their own theology of God and Salvation both within the Church and as apologetic to those with whom they shared their parishes, thus welcoming couples into church and having the opportunity to explain the Christian faith through the theology of the liturgy in the marriage service.

⁷⁹⁰ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 103, p.28.

The symbolism of marriage between those of different religions is a symbolism which reflects the demographic changes that had occurred in England during the timeframe that I have been investigating. It is also symbolic of the exclusive–inclusivism that became the defining theology of the IFCG: the determination to remind Christians of what is essentially Christian – Scripture, the Incarnation and the Trinity – whilst at the same time accepting that their theology would always have to be characterised by the ‘hospitality’ of the Established Church. This is the exclusive–inclusivism I have identified throughout the thesis and which I now hope to spend some time explaining as a category of the Theology of Religions, and as the essence of Anglican Practical Theology. For this task, I turn to the Conclusion.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

This thesis has been concerned to investigate two things: the methodology of Anglican Theology and whether there is an Anglican Theology of Religious Pluralism. The two areas are interrelated in so far as I have used the four case studies of interfaith questions to illustrate the methodology of Anglican Theology. The conclusions I have arrived at are that Anglican Theology can be described as a kind of Practical Theology and that the best way to describe an Anglican Theology of Religions is 'exclusive-inclusivism'.

In this final chapter, I shall also consider some of the areas for further research which arise from this thesis.

6.1 Dialogical Ecclesiology: a conversation with the past

In the early part of this thesis, I joined the debate with Sykes and Avis about whether the Church of England can be said to have Doctrines of its own and agreed with both of them that the Church of England has something distinctive to add to the Doctrines of the Catholic Church (which are already its own) and that the distinctive voice is to do with its methodology.⁷⁹¹ I argued that the history and traditions of the Church of England mean that its ecclesiology is characterised by the 'Via Media'. This is influenced by several different factors which can best be summarised as the continuous conversation between Scripture, Reason, Tradition and the fourth element,

⁷⁹¹ Sykes, S., and Booty, J., (eds) *The Study of Anglicanism* (SPCK, London, 1988), Sykes, S., *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (Mowbray, Oxford, 1978/1984), Avis, P., *The Identity of Anglicanism* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2007), Avis, P., *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2002), see in particular, chapter 17, pp.335–354. See Chapter 1, pages 36–43.

which I have indentified as 'experience'. I looked to Hooker's work for the origins of this 'conversation' but the identification of 'experience' as the fourth Dialogue partner came about through my reading of his work into Positive and Natural Law. I identified 'experience' as that which raises the questions which Hooker calls '*adiaphora*'. For Hooker these were mostly political but in the twentieth century, 'experience' is the living reality of those parishioners of the Established Church who find themselves faced with questions which do not seem to be easily answered by Scripture, Reason or Tradition. In the material with which this thesis is concerned I used the example, 'how can I be a faithful Christian and worship at a service whose liturgy does not mention Jesus Christ?' In both cases, the issues raised are more acute because the Church of England is a National (Established) Church; and it is this, and the continuing internal conversation which forms the basis for the model of 'exclusive-*inclusivism*' that I have put forward. Thus, in the sixteenth century, the work of Hooker (and Melanchthon, as I have shown) placed great importance on political unity,⁷⁹² as did Elizabeth I and her chief ministers, Burghley and Walsingham: demonstrated by the final draft of the Thirty-Nine Articles (1571) and the revisions to the Book of Common Prayer (Elizabethan Prayer Book, 1559).⁷⁹³ In the twentieth century, political unity was still important, as the concerns about racism, riots and the impact on the immigrant community of demolishing and selling a church building showed.⁷⁹⁴ However, there is a greater emphasis on what might be termed

⁷⁹² Melanchthon was convinced that Reformed Christians should unite under a strong prince, against the Pope and the King of Spain, which made him very unpopular in Europe. See Schofield, J., *Philip Melanchthon and the English Reformation* (Ashgate, Hants, 2006), p.79.

⁷⁹³ As noted in Chapter 1, pp.26–27, Matthew Parker was in charge of the revisions made to the Book of Common Prayer during Elizabeth's reign.

⁷⁹⁴ In earlier chapters, I considered the impact of the 1958, Notting Hill Race Riots (Chapter 2, p.92) and the 1981 Brixton and Toxteth Riots and the implications of these for the Debates on multi-faith worship and Dialogue (Chapter 4, p.230ff). In the Debates about the use and disposal of redundant church buildings, there was frequent concern raised about the impact on the 'immigrant community' and of being 'mis-represented by the press (as racist)' if the principle of demolishing and selling the site to a commercial bidder were passed See Chapter 3, page 167, for example.

‘confessional’ unity, in the twentieth century, as I have traced through the Debates which were concerned to extract ‘clarity’ and ‘a principle’ with which to work.⁷⁹⁵ Ecclesiology, in this thesis, refers to the history and traditions of the Church of England and the way in which these can (and, I argue, *must*) inform the present. Ecclesiology is more, therefore, than ‘sociologically informed theology’ or as ‘the impact of the human sciences on the corporate self-understanding of the Church.’⁷⁹⁶ I have argued that the ecclesiology of the Church of England has, therefore, always been characterised by this internal conversation between Scripture, Reason, Tradition and Experience, and as I have shown in the references to the Elizabethan reign, the evidence for this is frequently found in its liturgy.⁷⁹⁷

6.2 Ecclesial Methodology: theology through liturgy

As well as Sykes’ contention that the Church of England does have Doctrines of its own, his argument is that what is distinctive about Anglican Theology is derived from the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinals.⁷⁹⁸ I have agreed with this perspective and have attempted to demonstrate the validity of the argument with extensive use of examples from the Reports and Debates of the General Synod on Religious Pluralism. Thus, I make the point that the first time that ‘other religions’ comes up for Debate (in a context that is not Mission), is within a Debate about liturgy, and liturgy for a National Service, attended by the Monarch. From the material I have been considering, it seems to be the case that discussion about what is essential to faith (Hooker’s ‘*adiaphora*’) takes place within the context of Debates about liturgy: thus,

⁷⁹⁵ See, for example, the first Debate on the use and disposal of redundant church buildings, Chapter 3, p.142.

⁷⁹⁶ See my references to the work of Percy and Bradbury in Chapter 1, p.52.

⁷⁹⁷ For examples from the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinals, see Chapter 1, pp.38–39.

⁷⁹⁸ Sykes, S., *Unashamed Anglicanism* (Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1995), pp.116 ff (Chapter 1, pp.36–37.)

in 1966, reference was made to a wedding where the best solution is seen as an explicitly Christian service (with some good Unitarian hymns) to which a Muslim man makes his assent.⁷⁹⁹ In 1992, after two written Reports and a Debate, it is agreed that reference to the Trinity and to Jesus as the Son of God must always remain in the liturgy, although selective and careful reference to the texts of other religions may be appropriate.⁸⁰⁰ The same conclusions were drawn in the same year when the IFCG considered mixed-faith marriage.⁸⁰¹ In this way, liturgy becomes the vehicle for the reflection which the Dialogue Debates also called for: one of the necessary results of interfaith Dialogue is the ability to provide what was called ‘authentic witness’ and this requires careful reflection on one’s own faith to establish where the similarities and differences lie. This is how interfaith encounter can lead back to Christian apologetics, as several members of Synod suggested during the Dialogue Debates.⁸⁰² What is interesting to note is that the evidence for this happening is to be found twenty years earlier in the Debates about liturgy. I have also made the point that liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer was written to be spacious enough to allow people to participate at the level at which they feel able to participate; which can be used as an illustration of the idea of truth gradually revealed and faith as a journey towards that truth (which is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ).⁸⁰³ Furthermore, I

⁷⁹⁹ *RP Lower House, Convocation of Canterbury 10/66*, The Revd E. G. Stride, p.387. See Chapter 2, page 96.

⁸⁰⁰ *Multi-Faith Worship? Guidance on the Situations Which Arise*. (GC Misc. 411). See Chapter 2, page 127.

⁸⁰¹ ‘...it is hard to see how a liturgy which made no reference to the Trinity could be construed as a rite and ceremony of the Church of England.’ The Report goes on to say that ‘if material from other faiths is to be included in the service, neither words, nor acts nor objects should have a meaning which is contrary to the Christian faith.’ *The Marriage of Adherents of Other Faiths in Anglican Churches*, para. 77, pp. 20–21. See Chapter 5, p.279.

⁸⁰² *RP 11/81 12/*, Mr H. Gracey (*Guildford*), p.1046. See Chapter 4, p.246.

⁸⁰³ I do not wish to be naive about the era in which these seminal documents for the Church of England were written. Archbishop Cranmer was burned as a heretic in 1556, the remains of Bucer (who died in 1551) were exhumed and ritually burned for the same reason, in 1557. It is an hermeneutical error to read twentieth-century ecumenical relations into sixteenth-century texts. However, despite the catalogue of evil against both Catholics and Protestants, which took place during the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary Tudor and Elizabeth I, nevertheless, the Prayer Book and Ordinal of

have demonstrated the link between the fact that so many of the theologians (past and present) in the Church of England are priests; priests, who like Race and Vanstone (and Herbert and Donne before them) were writing their theology from within the context of the parish. This is Practical Theology both as 'praxis' and as 'habitus', a theology which has to take seriously the possibility of Revelation in other religions because working so closely with them gives priests the opportunity for seeing the 'anonymous Christ' within them.⁸⁰⁴ I have not developed the idea of where Anglican Theology fits into the spectrum of Practical Theology, because this thesis has been concerned specifically with the question of Religious Pluralism. However, it quickly became clear that this question could not be fully investigated without reference to the discipline of Practical Theology and, in particular, to the Anglican question of the relationship between Scripture, Reason, Tradition and 'experience'. The roots of 'exclusive-inclusivism' are found not only in the Church of England as National Church and in the 'Via Media' between Reformed and Catholic traditions, but also in a Church whose theology can be found in its Liturgy and is often written by those 'in the field'. As with the priests writing Liberation Theology in South America, priest-theologian's work is informed by the real issues which they face 'on the ground'; hence Race's early concern with the question of other faiths from his parish first in Southwark, London and then in Leicester. This is another example of why Anglican Theology should be understood as Practical Theology, and when applied to questions of Religious Pluralism, the relationship between practice and theology in the Church of England is also evident among those Missionaries (Clergy and Laity) who have

Elizabeth's reign *do* contain evidence of a determination to make room for both Catholics and Protestants alike within the Church of England. Perhaps this is all the more remarkable against the backdrop of violence and persecution of the time.

⁸⁰⁴ There is an implicit question here about whether the concept of an anonymous Christ is the same as saying that there is revelation in other religions. This is a complex argument in the field of the Theology of Religions. See D'Costa, G., *Christianity and the World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2009), pp.19–25.

contributed to the Theology of Religions: Nazir-Ali, Anderson, Taylor and Lamb. Neither of these points are distinctive to the Church of England, (Liberation Theology began in the Roman Catholic Church) but they contribute to the argument that both Anglican Theology and the Theology of Religions should be understood as a branch of Practical Theology.

6.3 Practical or Systematic?

In the Introduction, I made the point that this thesis is inevitably multidisciplinary and as it has progressed, I have demonstrated the importance of the link between this fact and the evidence for Anglican Theology as Practical Theology.⁸⁰⁵ As part of the final chapter, it then becomes necessary to consider the implications of the multidisciplinary approach of both Anglican Theology and Practical Theology.

So far, I have mentioned only one element of Sykes' work: the fact that he highlighted liturgy and the Thirty-Nine Articles as the distinctive elements of Anglican Theology, but he also said that the Church of England was capable of producing Systematic Theology and indeed should produce more. He argued that the place for this was the Doctrine Commission, of which he was Chair from 1997 to 2003. Ballard and Pritchard have argued that the model of Practical Theology, which is informed by Scriptural principles and the traditional teachings of the Church, is 'applied theology' and traces its roots back to Schleiermacher.⁸⁰⁶ This is the model of Practical Theology in which the idea of Systematic Theology most easily fits. However, my attempt to consider Anglican Theology, Anglican ecclesiology, Practical Theology and the

⁸⁰⁵ Woodward, J., and Pattison, S., (eds) *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2000), p.5. See my reference to and discussion of this in Chapter 1, p.49.

⁸⁰⁶ Ballard, P., and Pritchard, J., *Practical Theology in Action* (SPCK, London, 1996/ 2006), pp.68–74.

Theology of Religions within the scope of one thesis raises an important question here: if Anglican Theology is indeed Practical Theology (if all theology is Practical Theology as Ballard and Pritchard have argued⁸⁰⁷), where is the place of Systematic Theology? This is a question which I believe is implicit in the work of Ballard and Pritchard but is not addressed. Should *all* theology be informed by the starting point of experience? Or indeed the experience of faith? This is an area which I have not addressed directly in this thesis, because I have wanted to argue first that Anglican Theology is Practical Theology. However, Sykes makes an important argument (which I considered in Chapter 1), that Anglicans have something distinctive to say about Doctrine and that this should be investigated systematically. What happens to this argument if Anglican Theology is in fact Practical Theology? I would define Systematic Theology as an academic discipline which tests the limits of the inherent logic of certain key Doctrines, against themselves, against the tradition of the Church and against the Scriptures. It is a vitally important part of Theology as a whole because it allows Christians to test the orthodoxy of an idea in a rigorous way which will be corrected by the internal logic of the system. Practical Theology can contribute to this by suggesting that the system can also test itself against the lived experience of the contemporary Christian community, in any given location. By saying that all theology is Practical Theology, I believe that Ballard and Pritchard (and others) are saying that Theology must always include the element of 'experience', or of faith as it is lived. This can be true for Systematic Theology, for Scriptural Theology, for Historical Theology and for the Theology of Religions. With this understanding, Practical Theology is still one discipline within Theology, but it is one which has reminded Theology as a whole of the importance of the relationship between the

⁸⁰⁷ See Ballard, P., and Pritchard, J., *Practical Theology in Action* (SPCK, London, 1996/2006), pp.63–4 and also Browning, D., in Atkinson, D., and Field, D., (eds) *New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* (Inter Varsity Press, Leicester, 1995), p.42. See Chapter 1, page 49.

academy and the Church. My own contention is that the systematic consideration of certain key areas of Doctrine, using the methodology of Anglican Theology (namely, with all the traditions present and then debated by all Laity, Clergy and Bishops), is vitally important for the health of the Church of England, and that the work that has come out of the Doctrine Commission so far represents a very distinctive example of the relationship between Systematic Theology and Practical Theology, which would be worth further analysis. Doctrines which have raised themselves as worthy of consideration as a result of *this* research would be Grace, Revelation and the role of Sacrament within the Church, as well as the question of the Tradition of the Church of England – both recovering what is distinctive and learning how to make best of use of it as a Dialogue partner in current theological debates. A particular area of ecumenical theology, which has been raised by this research, is the connections between Anglican Theology and Orthodox Theology. Orthodox Theology is both Practical Theology and theology informed by its own history and tradition. It too seems best described as theology as ‘habitus’ and yet it loses none of the importance of tradition or its systematic approach to theology. Some of the best recent work on Anglican Theology has come from those involved in ecumenism and the necessity required by inter-Church Dialogue of working as both ‘provisional church’⁸⁰⁸ but also having to make an apology for the distinctive approach that one’s Church brings to the conversation is an approach which has underpinned everything I have done in this thesis.⁸⁰⁹

⁸⁰⁸ See reference to this in works of Runcie and Ramsey, for example. Robert Runcie in his opening address to the 1988 Lambeth Conference, entitled ‘The Nature of the Unity We Seek.’ See *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Reports, Resolutions and Pastoral Letters from the Bishops at The Lambeth Conference 1988*, p.13. Ramsey, A. M., ‘What is Anglican Theology?’ (*Theology* 48, 1945), p.6. Both of these (among others) quoted in Chapter 1, pp.32–33.

⁸⁰⁹ I have made extensive use of the work of Paul Avis, General Secretary of the Council for Christian Unity since 1998. The two works which best illustrate his combining of ecumenical theology with apologetic and ecclesiology are Avis, P., *The Identity of Anglicanism* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2007), and Avis, P., *Anglicanism and the Christian Church* (T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2002).

Anglican Theology as Practical Theology? But what of the other question: what if we are to understand the roots of Practical Theology as being within the Reformation and not the eighteenth century? What are the implications of this for Practical Theology? Indeed, why stop at the Reformation? If all theology should include the element of 'experience', then why not reach back to the history of the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church and begin to look at them through the lens of Practical Theology? Practical Theology is recovering the element of experience and bringing it back into the conversation. It does this by trying to work from the situation itself and understanding the experience of that situation by augmenting the theological approach with anthropology, sociology, psychology, and history (amongst other disciplines). Literary and Biblical criticism has been doing something similar since the nineteenth century, in source, form and redaction criticism. Thus, for example, the Gospel of Matthew is understood not just on its own terms as a document of faith, but also as a literary work that has combined at least two different sources (Mark and 'Q'), and a work written for a specific community (probably a Syrian Jewish Church based in Antioch) at a very specific time in history (between 70 and 80AD).⁸¹⁰ So, both to extrapolate this and develop my own argument about Church Tradition, one could take an example from the tradition and teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and show how it is possible to treat the work of Augustine of Hippo as Practical Theology. Thus, we would pay more attention to his personal history (psychology and biography), to the period of time in which he lived (social history, anthropology) and the people to whom he was writing as well as including a look at the hermeneutic of

⁸¹⁰ For example, see Keener, C. S., *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1999). A work like Keener's makes full use of the literary, historical and anthropological research which has been done in this area. Thus, his introduction looks at source criticism (pp.8–11), form criticism, (pp.11–12), redaction criticism, (pp.12–14), contemporary literary criticism (pp.14–15), social-historical and sociological interpretation (pp.15–17). For discussion about the community to whom Matthew was writing and the date when it was written, see 'provenance and date' (pp.36–51).

the present and how his work has been interpreted in both our age and throughout history. But my point is that while Practical Theology has made full use of its own social context since the eighteenth century, it has opened itself to the criticism of not taking history and tradition seriously enough (as I have highlighted in this work).⁸¹¹ If we understand Anglican Theology as Practical Theology, then I also want to recover the historical roots of Practical Theology. I agree with the sentiment that one need not stop at the Reformation. Each denomination can uncover the historical roots of Practical Theology from their particular perspective and begin to look at their own traditions through the lens of Practical Theology. This will bring a new dynamic to Church Tradition whilst at the same time giving greater depth to the discipline of Practical Theology.

6.4 The Theology of Religions

In this thesis, the analytical framework for the question of Anglican Theology has been the Theology of Religions. The theory I have been working with, that there is such a thing as a distinctive Anglican Theology and that it is best described as Practical Theology, has implications for Theology of Religions as a discipline, as one might expect. Thus, the questions I have raised about the place of Systematic Theology in Practical Theology also need to be considered from the perspective of the Theology of Religions. This discipline, whilst also 'recent' in the history of theology,⁸¹² has been understood as part of the discipline of Systematic Theology. The advantage of understanding the Theology of Religions as a branch of Systematic

⁸¹¹ So, for example, my criticism raised in Chapter 1 about the over-reliance of Practical Theology on the social sciences (pp.52–53). See Ballard, P., and Pritchard, J., *Practical Theology in Action* (SPCK, London, 1996/2006), pp.63–4. Milbank, too, offers an informed critique of this in Milbank, J., *Theology and Social Theory* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1990/2006), specifically Chapter 5, 'Policing the Sublime: a Critique of the Sociology of Religion', pp.101–146.

⁸¹² I have traced its formal beginnings, with Race, to the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference. See Race, A., *Christians and Religious Pluralism* (SCM, London, 1983/1993), p.15.

Theology is that it encourages theologians to address Doctrinal issues (Christology, God, Mission and Salvation and the Church) through the lens of Religious Pluralism. Some of the recent work on Salvation (and the descent into Hell) testifies to this.⁸¹³ However, this thesis is suggesting that an Anglican Theology of Religions should be understood as Practical Theology. What are the implications for this if the Theology of Religions is understood as Practical Theology? Is there not a danger that the academic rigour of a pure quest for 'Truth' will be lost? This is another question which needs to be addressed by future research. Certainly, there is a sense in which a Systematic Theology of Religions can never be done outside the ecclesia; the questions it raises are questions of Doctrine and Truth and not merely academic questions. This engages with the recent Debate in academic theology about separating 'theology' from 'religious studies'.⁸¹⁴ My contention is that the Theology of Religions has more to do with Theology than the 'religious studies' and 'comparative religion'

⁸¹³ See Griffiths, P., 'Is there a doctrine of the descent into Hell?' *Pro Ecclesia* XVII/3/Summer 2008, pp. 257–268 and Helm, P., 'Are they few that be saved?', in M. de S. Cameron, N., (ed.), *Universalism and the Doctrine of Hell* (Paternoster Press, Carlisle, 1991), pp.256–81. See Chapter 1, p87. The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England noted the impact which Religious Pluralism has on Doctrine in its 1997 work *The Mystery of Salvation*. Chapter 7 is entitled 'Christ and the World Faiths', pp.390–422. See *Contemporary Doctrine Classics* (Church House Publishing, London, 2005), pp. 273–462.

⁸¹⁴ This is an area which David F. Ford and others have contributed to since 2005. So, D'Costa, G., *Theology in the Public Square* (Blackwell, Oxford, 2005), which argues that theology should return to an appropriate ecclesial accountability and promotes the idea of a Christian University. See also, Ford, D. F., *Shaping Theology: Engagements in a Religious and Secular World* (Blackwell, Oxford, 2007), Chapter 1, 'Theology' and Chapter 2 'A Long Rumour of Wisdom: redescribing Theology', pp.1–26 and 27–44. Ford describes himself as a practical theologian (see Cunningham, D. S., 'The Practical Theology of David Ford' in *The Christian Century* (May 3/2003), pp.30–37). His response to Religious Pluralism has been to establish (with Dan Hardy and Peter Ochs) the discipline of 'Scriptural Reasoning' in 1995; a forum in which Jewish, Muslim and Christian academics come together to discuss the Tanakh, Bible and Qur'an. As originally conceived, it is an academic practice involving theologians, religious philosophers and text scholars and was aimed at 'repairing' or 'correcting' patterns of modern philosophical or theological reasoning, as well as being a form of interfaith dialogue. 'Textual Reasoning' is the practice of Jewish philosophers reading the Talmud in conversation with scholars of rabbinics. In 2007 he said of it, 'The past decade of Scriptural Reasoning has been the setting in which I have learned most about conflict in conversation, how it might be possible to maintain engagement and even friendship in the midst of continuing, unresolved differences.' Ford, D. F., *Shaping Theology: Engagements in a Religious and Secular World* (Blackwell, Oxford, 2007), p.xiv.

which Religious Pluralism in England has spawned.⁸¹⁵ For this reason its place within the field of Practical Theology is correct. Practical Theology is confessional, based on experience and faith and grows out of the tradition of a particular Church (ecclesiological). As I have highlighted, one of the questions which my thesis raises is the relationship between Practical and Systematic Theology; but that is not to say that the Theology of Religions should not be understood as Practical Theology. The questions which the Theology of Religions raises are questions of faith and Doctrine. There is no doubt that Religious Pluralism in England first raised questions of hospitality and Dialogue before all other questions, as the material from the Debates of the General Synod demonstrates. These were questions which affected the Church of England in particular, because it is a National Church. Perhaps first and foremost, this is what is distinctive about the Church of England: its place as the Established Church and the responsibilities it has to its citizens. As in Elizabeth I's time, the first questions raised are often ones of National Unity. But whilst National Unity will always inform the theology of the Church of England, it can never be definitive. For this reason, Dialogue as hospitality and solidarity with other faiths was only ever *part* of the story. For as we have already seen, Anglican ecclesiology means both political and confessional unity. For this reason, there is always an inherent tension to be found within all its internal documents: the tension between those whose theology is informed by the social conscience of the National Church and those for whom

⁸¹⁵ The response in the academic world to Religious Pluralism in England has been rapid since the 1960s. The first department of Religious Studies was established in 1967 at the new University of Lancaster in England, under Professor Ninian Smart. He had previously been the H. G. Wood Professor of Theology at the University of Birmingham (a position in which he was succeeded by John Hick), where he had made significant changes to the curriculum, shifting it from an exclusive focus on Christianity to encompass world religions. 'Religious Studies' was established by Smart as a 'non-confessional, methodologically agnostic discipline that was essential to a secular academy and would sit alongside other disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and psychology. This argument for separating Theology and Religious Studies can be found in Shepherd, J. J., (ed) *Ninian Smart on World Religions. Volume 1: Religious Experience and Philosophical Analysis* (Ashgate, Surrey, 2007), Part V, 'Religious Studies and Religious Education: Method and Theory in the Study of Religions', pp.177–245.

Scripture must always come before Tradition. The tension between those for whom Tradition is always most important and those for whose theology is informed first by Reason: the tension between Reformed and Catholic, or Evangelical, Liberal and Catholic. In the Church of England, these differences are part of the methodology which underpins theology, a methodology which I have identified as 'mutual correction'. In the General Synod (based as it is on Parliament) the tensions are built into a system of debate and balanced argument. The theology of mutual correction becomes more apparent in the writing of Reports (including the Doctrine Commission), where the tensions are welcomed and made full use of; inviting *members of all traditions* to contribute to the wider picture. There is a humility here which is best represented by some of Michael Ramsey's work:

While the Anglican Church is vindicated by its place in history, with a strikingly balanced witness to Gospel and Church and sound learning, its greater vindication lies in its pointing through its own history to something of which it is a fragment. Its credentials are its incompleteness, with the tension and travail in its soul. It is clumsy and untidy, it baffles neatness and logic. For it is sent not to commend itself as 'the best type of Christianity', but by its very brokenness to point to the universal Church wherein all have died.⁸¹⁶

Ramsey suggests that there is a sense in which the conflict and confusion of many voices is part of a much greater quest for truth. This is a humility born of dissonance; it represents what I have uncovered during the course of this work - the difficulties of frequently reaching the limits of the theology of mutual correction and of realising that clear-cut answers are not always achievable. Here lie the roots of the apophatic tradition which I identified as part of the historical tradition of Anglican Theology, in

⁸¹⁶ See my introduction to the idea of the Church of England as a 'provisional' Church and Ramsey's contribution to this, in Chapter 1, pp.51–52, Ramsey, A. M., 'What is Anglican Theology?' (*Theology* 48, 1945), p.6. This quotation (above) is taken from Ramsey, M., *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (Longmans, Green & Co, London, 1936) p.220.

Chapter 1.⁸¹⁷ For this reason, the Church of England came up with the title of ‘exclusive–inclusivism’ for the theology which I have argued is an Anglican Theology of Religions. Anglican Theology will always be characterised by inclusivism, because the Church of England is characterised both by its own internal Dialogue and by its desire for unity.

So what does exclusive–inclusivism look like? Can it be considered a proper contribution to the Theology of Religions? In Chapter 1, I noted the exclusive–inclusivism of the Formularies and Ordinal of the Church of England, using examples from both the Thirty-Nine Articles and Morning Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer. In each of the case studies I have considered in the rest of the chapters of this thesis, there has been the opportunity to trace Race’s three ‘types’. These were not made use of in the Reports and Debates of the Church of England until 1984 and the publication of the IFCG Report *Towards a Theology for Inter-Faith Dialogue*. What is interesting to note is that the first time the three-fold paradigm was used; the categories of exclusivism and inclusivism were combined in order to describe the position of the Church of England.⁸¹⁸ The Report described its own position as inclusivist and I have shown how this is usually the case with the Church of England Reports.⁸¹⁹ The pattern which is discernable is that when the Report comes to be debated in General Synod, those who can be called exclusivists wish to reaffirm the unique revelation of Jesus Christ. Thus, taking the Reports on their own integrity and because of legal responsibility of hospitality which is the nature of the Established Church of England, I am arguing that one has to define an Anglican Theology of

⁸¹⁷ See Chapter 1, p.38.

⁸¹⁸ *RP 7/84 15/2*, The Rt Revd Barry Rogerson (*Bishop of Wolverhampton*), pp.781–2.

⁸¹⁹ See also, for example, the Report, *Communities and Buildings* (Church House Publishing, London, 1996), 3.67, p.30. This identifies itself as ‘inclusive’ and, when referring to other religions, uses the phrase ‘all those who worship in spirit and in truth.’

Religions as inclusivist but that it is an *exclusive* inclusivism. So, for example, in the Debate the Chairman of the IFCG said: 'we have an inclusivist view of God's activity in the world, but with an exclusive loyalty to Jesus Christ.'⁸²⁰ Inclusivists are described by Rogerson as 'those who acknowledge that whilst God has fully revealed himself in Jesus Christ, also believe that God has not left himself without witness in every age and culture.'⁸²¹

I have made the point more than once in this thesis that there is a danger in trying to extrapolate a carefully worked out (systematic) theology from Reports written by the Church of England in response to particular, practical problems. However, many of the Reports which I have been considering, *were written in response* to a call from the General Synod for 'further theological reflection' and were offered to the laity and clergy of General Synod and the Dioceses as 'theology'. So, my premise for suggesting that an Anglican Theology of Religions is best described as exclusive-inclusivism is because this is how the IFCG so described it in 1984. But does this position have any theological coherence and does it have anything to add to the debate in the field of the Theology of Religions? In Chapter 1 I defined exclusivism as the belief that Jesus Christ is the unique and final revelation of God and that Salvation comes from explicit faith in him alone (*solus Christus* and *fides ex auditu*). Christ is the Truth, He is fulfilment, He is judgement. What is the difference between this and inclusivism? The definition of inclusivism which I have been using comes from Race and begins with God's universal will to save. This leads to the idea that God can also be revealed in historical and social structures and therefore in the rites and traditions of non-Christian religions. The question which is currently being debated among

⁸²⁰ RP 7/84 15/2, The Rt Revd Barry Rogerson (*Bishop of Wolverhampton*), pp.781-2.

⁸²¹ RP 7/84 15/2, The Rt Revd Barry Rogerson (*Bishop of Wolverhampton*), pp.781-2.

inclusivists is whether God can and does 'save' through other religious structures and whether other religions need to come to explicit faith in Christ.

I have so far defined the Anglican Theology of Religions as 'inclusive' firstly because the documents from *the Church of England* so describe themselves and secondly because of the legal imperative to hospitality (and therefore *Dialogue*) which is integral to it. But does the theology of the Reports cohere with a formal definition of inclusivism? I believe that it does. There is a significant majority of evidence from the Reports which I have identified in this thesis, that the starting position of the IFCG was God's universal will to save and the belief that God could be and had been revealed throughout history and in the religious beliefs and practices of other religions. Jesus Christ is not seen as the *complete* revelation of God. This is the importance of Dialogue with other faiths: it is through listening that Christians can learn more about their own faith and, at the same time, learn how to 'be ready always to give an answer for the hope that is in you' (1 Peter 3:15), because all grace is always and everywhere causally related to Christ. These are points of significant difference with exclusivists and they are points against which many members of Synod argued, as I have shown.

Why, then, have I argued that the Church of England's inclusivism must be characterised as exclusive-inclusivism and is this a genuine category in the Theology of Religions? I have already discussed the three categories on which I have judged the Anglican Theology of Religions to be inclusivist: self-referentially, legally and theologically. The exclusivism of the Church of England is chiefly the voice from the Debates which holds that the Salvation won through Christ is only available through

faith in Christ, which comes from hearing the Gospel proclaimed. This ‘voice’ was heard by those who wrote the Reports and I would argue that the inclusivism which is enshrined in those Reports, which were written as a request for ‘further clarification’ from Synod, represents what D’Costa would go on to call ‘restrictivist inclusivism’.

He defines it thus:

Restrictivist inclusivists hold that Christ is the normative revelation of God, the ontological and causal grounds of salvation and that baptism is the normal means of salvation. However, they also hold that since not all have had the opportunity to hear the gospel, a just God makes provision that all might freely accept or reject God through varying means: the natural law inscribed in the universe and in the heart – through conscience, or the good, true and beautiful elements within the non-Christian religions. They do not accept that other religions per se can be salvific means but at their best they are preparations for the gospel. Christ is ontologically and causally exclusive to salvation, not epistemologically.⁸²²

Of course, D’Costa goes on to argue that ‘certain exclusivists better explain the epistemologically necessary relationship to Christ that is required as a final means to salvation’, which is part of his own thesis that ‘restrictivist inclusivists are better grouped as universal access exclusivists.’⁸²³ These arguments are still in their formative stages, and it may be that D’Costa’s theory is proved correct. However, on the basis of the historical, internal logic of the official documents of the Church of England and because of the distinctive methodology which Establishment brings to its theology my own conclusion is that the Anglican Theology of Religious Pluralism

⁸²² D’Costa, G., *Christianity and World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2009), pp.23–24.

⁸²³ For universal access exclusivists, there is always the final epistemic necessity of faith (*fides ex auditu*). D’Costa suggests that for this group there are four possibilities for this: There will be the chance to respond to the gospel and enter salvation i) at the point of death, ii) after death, in a post-mortem state, iii) after death in a reincarnation as another person or iv) in purgatory. D’Costa, G., *Christianity and World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2009), pp.24–29.

during a thirty-year period in the twentieth century is best described as ‘exclusivist–inclusivist.’

Having claimed that there is a distinctive Anglican Theology of Religions which should be understood as exclusive–inclusivism, I wish to suggest that Anglican Theology should indeed be considered to be an important conversation partner in the academic debate about the Theology of Religions. I have done this by identifying the academics amongst the Clergy and Laity of the Church of England and by tracing their voices through the Reports and Debates about Religious Pluralism. I have identified occasions when the internal Debates of the General Synod either pre-empt or accurately reflect the academic debate. And I have shown how a church that is internally ecumenical (a dialogical ecclesiology) brings a particular understanding to Debates on Dialogue with members of other faiths.

So, what is the contribution that an Anglican Theology of Religion brings? As I have already noted, it questions whether the Theology of Religions should not understand itself more as Practical Theology than Systematic Theology. More than this, it may also be that these case studies can be used as evidence for the contention that the lines between the three ‘types’ of the three-fold paradigm are so blurred as to throw into question the whole typology itself. In this thesis I have consistently highlighted the doctrinal issues where the different types would be able to agree. In doing so, one of the things which has become apparent is that pluralism is not a theological position which is held by many in the Church of England. As Race himself was proposing a pluralist perspective, it would be impossible to say that pluralism is not a theological strand within the Church of England, but another area for future research would be the

consideration of Race's pluralism, alongside Smith-Cameron's and also Lampe's work. It is tempting to include Wiles, Nineham and Cupitt as pluralists, but in order to do this with integrity, the parameters of definition must surely be about more than Robinson's 'Copernican Revolution', a shift from christo-centrism to theo-centrism and an understanding of the Incarnation as 'myth'? Wiles and the others were engaged in a debate with analytic philosophy, not with Religious Pluralism. However, work which investigated whether there is an Anglican 'pluralist' position in the Theology of Religions might uncover whether these Anglican theologians did indeed apply their theology to the question of other religions. My own conclusion is to identify an Anglican Theology of Religions as exclusivist-inclusivism. If the typology is shown to be redundant at some point in the future, using the argument that all the types eventually collapse into exclusivism, then I would contend that the Anglican Theology of Religions, informed as it is by both internal diversity and Establishment, would have to be fruitfully engaged with in order to prove the argument.

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